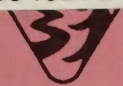


88045279



Bureau of Land Management

CALIFORNIA STATEWIDE WILDERNESS STUDY REPORT

1990

Part 4

Volume 1

*Contains WSA's: CA-010-012 through CA-010-108 and
CA-040-203 through CA-040-308*

Garcia Mountain
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CA-010-102

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Machesna
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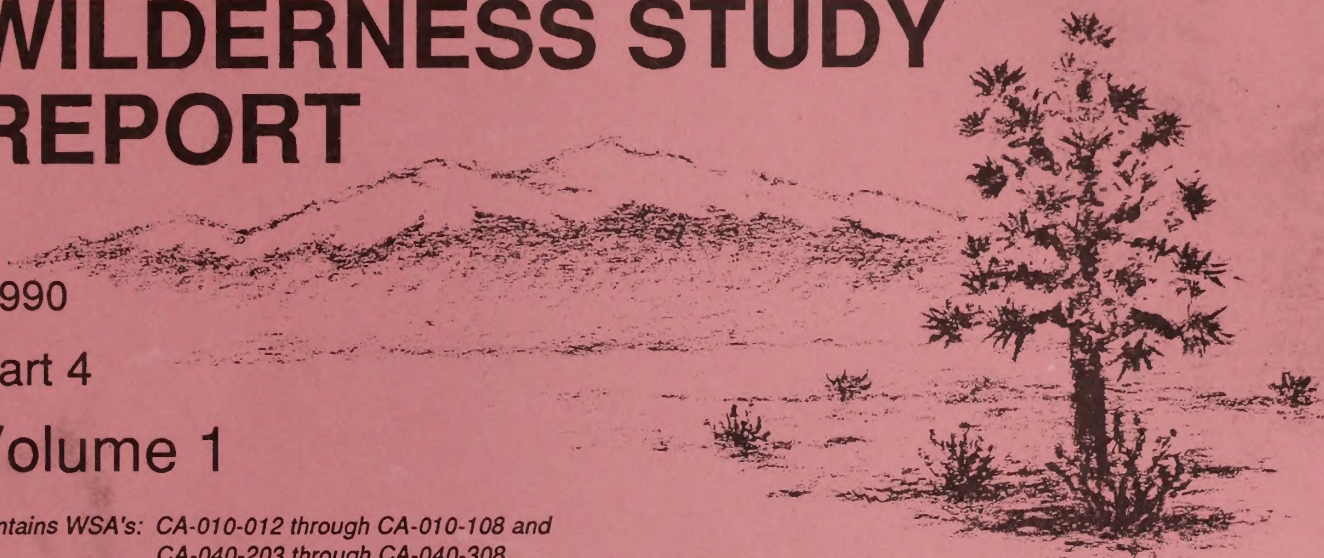
Merced River
CA-040-203

Panoche Hills North
CA-040-301A

Panoche Hills South
CA-040-301B

Pinnacles
CA-040-303

Ventana Contiguous
CA-040-308



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Supplemental information to these reports includes Environmental Documents, Mineral Survey Reports, and maps. To review these supplemental data, or to obtain additional information, please contact:

*Bureau of Land Management
Branch of Wilderness Resources
Room 3360
Main Interior Building
18th and C Streets
Washington, D.C. 20002*

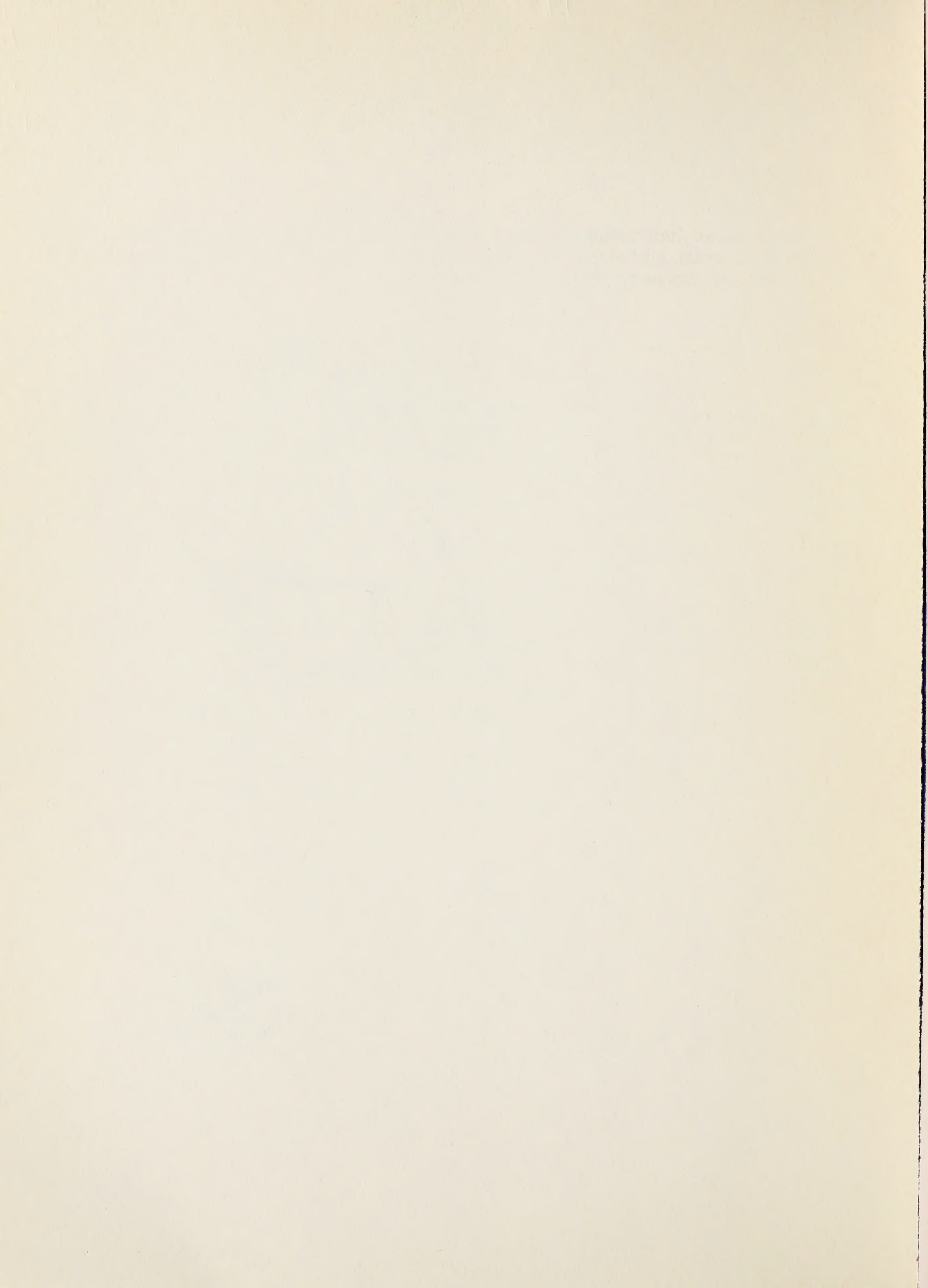
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Federal Building
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Garcia Mountain

CA-010-012

Geological Survey

1894

GARCIA MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CA-010-012)

1. THE STUDY AREA --- 80 acres

The Garcia Mountain WSA is located in San Luis Obispo County adjacent to the United States Forest Service (USFS) Garcia Further Planning Area (recommended suitable for wilderness designation in the Los Padres National Forest's Final Land Management Plan). The WSA is approximately 25 miles east of San Luis Obispo and consists of two separate 40 acre parcels of BLM land (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The WSA extends from the border of the USFS Garcia Further Planning Area along each 40-acre parcel's eastern boundary only.

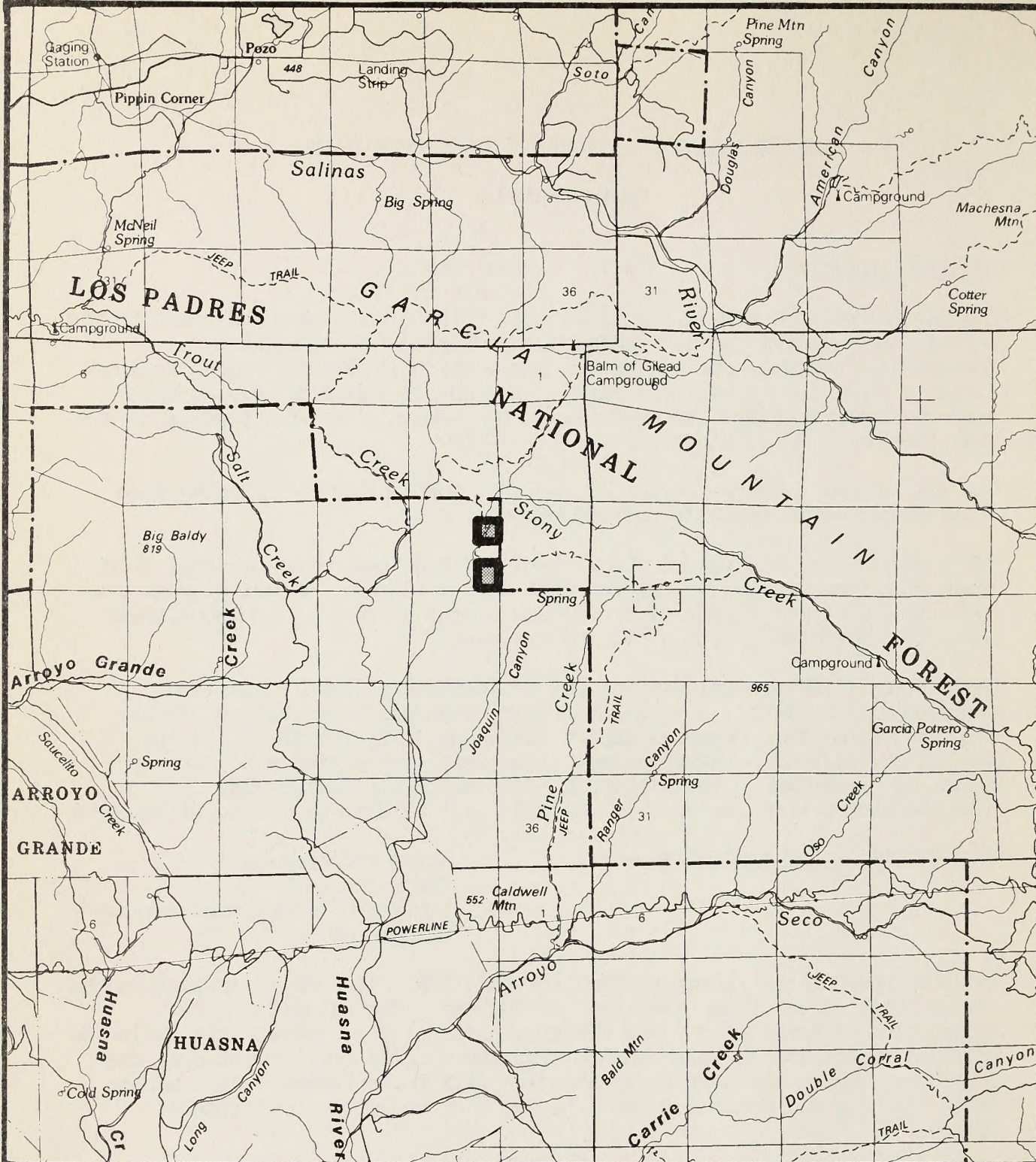
These small, isolated parcels have stands of blue oak along seasonal Stony Creek with some coast live oak on north facing slopes. Annual grasses are found beneath these stands of trees. Chaparral is mixed throughout these areas and is thickest high above the drainages.

The WSA was studied under Section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Suitability recommendations were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the California Section 202 Wilderness Study Areas. A summary of the area's wilderness values was included in the Final EIS. Two different suitability recommendations were analyzed in the EIS: all wilderness and no wilderness.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE --- 0 acres recommended
for wilderness
80 BLM acres recommended for non-
wilderness

No wilderness is the recommendation for this WSA. The entire acreage in the WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. The all-wilderness alternative is considered to be the environmentally preferred alternative as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The no-wilderness alternative will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The WSA is recommended non-suitable for the following reasons: The wilderness values are not highly significant and the current management has proven effective in protecting the area's existing resources. The Los Padres National Forest has indicated that the lack of wilderness values and topographic continuity of the WSA adjacent to the USFS Garcia Mountain area which is recommended for wilderness, will not enhance their wilderness management of the area. In addition, the northern parcel in this WSA contains Forest Service Road No. 15E06 (actually a primitive jeep trail), which is closed to public motorized vehicle access. The WSA contains no special features.



R 31
W

R32W

R32W R31W

NONE

RECOMMENDED FOR
WILDERNESS

RECOMMENDED FOR
NONWILDERNESS

RECOMMENDED FOR
NONWILDERNESS

LAND OUTSIDE WSA
RECOMMENDED FOR
WILDERNESS

LAND OUTSIDE WSA
RECOMMENDED FOR
WILDERNESS

SPLIT ESTATE

SPLIT ESTATE

STATE

STATE

PRIVATE

PRIVATE

Garcia Mountain
Proposal
MAP-1

0 1 2 3
MILES

010-012
JUNE, 1988

In addition, managing these areas as wilderness would be extremely difficult. Frequent signing and patrols of the boundaries would be necessary.

With this non-suitable recommendation there is a one-half mile route of travel which will remain available for vehicular use.

TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	80
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
Total		80
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Study Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	80
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		80

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The two small 40-acre parcels that make up this WSA generally retain their primeval character and influence, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable. The northernmost parcel has USFS Road No. 15E06 crossing it from north to south paralleling Stony Creek. This road does not show on the

USFS public maps and has been closed to vehicles. The road has not been maintained for years and resembles a primitive trail, thereby affecting the naturalness of the parcel very little. No structures or fences are known to exist in either parcel. No vegetation manipulation has taken place in this WSA.

2. Solitude: Opportunities for solitude in this WSA are limited due to its small size and boundary with private land on three sides (both 40-acre parcels border USFS land only on their east sides).

This WSA may be overflowed in the future by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission during approved military operations. The visual intrusions and associated noise create temporary effects on solitude which are deemed acceptable and necessary as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and unconfined recreation: Very little opportunity for primitive and unconfined types of recreation are present; the northern parcel in this WSA contains Forest Service Road No. 15E06 which is closed to motorized vehicles and sees very little visitor use (an estimated 10 hunters per year pass through). The southern parcel has no physical access (trails) and is choked with thick vegetation. No use is projected.
4. Special features: The WSA contains no ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS)

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 80 acres of the California Chaparral/California Oakwoods ecosystem. Wilderness designation of this WSA would not increase the diversity of the types of ecosystems represented in the NWPS.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BIM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
California Chaparral/ California Oakwoods	4	105,301	6	39,648
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
California Chaparral/ California Oakwoods	4	105,301	6	39,648

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of 15 major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3
Wilderness Opportunities for Residents of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	<u>NWPS areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>California</u>				
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,515
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Fresno	35	4,048,852	28	460,790
Los Angeles-Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
Merced	33	3,957,550	25	348,753
Modesto	36	4,126,963	81	1,722,326
Oxnard-Ventura	23	2,195,198	85	2,703,260
Riverside-San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
Salinas-Seaside-Monterey	24	3,676,896	45	644,415
San Francisco-Oakland	39	4,473,002	39	565,614
San Jose	27	3,765,512	29	352,748
Santa Barbara-Santa Maria- Lompoc	20	1,166,142	35	528,590
Santa Cruz	27	3,765,512	32	407,890
Stockton	35	4,061,833	46	601,496
Visalia-Tulare-Porterville	34	4,431,635	61	1,681,921

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: There are no other BLM WSAs within 50 air miles recommended for wilderness designation. The Santa Lucia and the Machesna Mountain Wilderness Areas are located approximately 10 miles and eight miles, respectively, northwest of the WSA. The San Rafael and Dick Smith Wilderness Areas are located 35 and 40 miles, respectively, to the south of the WSA. All areas mentioned are managed by the Los Padres National Forest.

C. Manageability

The Garcia Mountain WSA is manageable as wilderness, but only with difficulty. Manageability problems include the small size and the lack of topographic continuity of the two units with the USFS area recommended for wilderness. Frequent signing of the borders would be required to insure the integrity of the units.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of information known at the time of the preliminary suitability recommendation: The geology and mineral resources of the Garcia Mountain WSA are described in the USFS 1988 Final EIS, Land and Resource Management Plan, Los Padres National Forest AMS - Minerals Addendum and in a U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Miscellaneous Field Studies Map (MF-1655-B), "Mineral Resource Potential Map of the Roadless Areas and the Santa Lucia Wilderness in the Los Padres National Forest, Southwestern California". The mineral resource data in the Affected Environment Section of the 1988 BLM Wilderness Recommendations, California Section 202 Wilderness Study Areas Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was taken largely from these sources, covering adjacent USFS administered lands. The BLM EIS indicates that the WSA has a low potential for the occurrence of oil and gas. The WSA is in the Coast Range geomorphic province and is composed primarily of interbedded Cretaceous marine sandstones and shales. The area is characterized by northwest trending folds and faults, roughly paralleling the mountain ranges.

Wildcat drilling for oil and gas occurred in an area five to ten miles to the south and southwest of the WSA from 1929 to 1983. About 50 holes were drilled, but none are currently producing. All the drilling was in Miocene sedimentary rocks. The WSA is also separated from the wildcat area by the East Huasna Fault Zone (Dibble, 1981, Geologic Map of the Caldwell Mesa Quadrangle, unpublished preliminary draft, USGS).

BLM records dated March 25, 1988, showed no unpatented mining claims, mineral leases or mineral material sales contracts/permits within this WSA.

2. Summary of significant new mineral resource data collected since the suitability recommendation, which should be considered in the final recommendation: No USGS or U.S. Bureau of Mines (BOM) mineral surveys were conducted in this WSA. As of May, 1988, no new mineral resource information concerning this WSA has been generated.

Because of the low potential for the occurrence of mineral resources, no mineral potential map was prepared for this document.

E. Impacts on Resources

The following table summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for all alternatives considered including designation or non-designation of the entire area as wilderness. (For a full explanation of this summary, refer to the California Section 202 Study Areas - Wilderness Final Environmental Impact Statement.)

Table 4 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impacts on Wilderness Values	Non-designation of the WSA as wilderness will not result in any anticipated impacts to the wilderness values. There are no management actions projected that will result in a loss of wilderness values and the perception of naturalness will be maintained. Potential fire suppression activities as a result of wildfires could lead to short-term impacts to the perception of naturalness.	Wilderness designation of the Garcia Mountain WSA would result in a slight positive benefit. Long-term protection from unanticipated future actions that could result in potential adverse impacts would be provided.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

During the wilderness inventory phase, one comment addressed the inventory unit's potential for oil and gas development.

During the study phase, a public hearing was held in Bakersfield, California, and written comments were accepted until February 15, 1988. The majority of the comments received supported the all-wilderness alternative for this unit.

No Federal, State or County agency comments were received specific to the WSA.

Sheep Ridge

CA-010-022

SHEEP RIDGE WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CA-010-022)

1. THE STUDY AREA --- 5,102 acres

The Sheep Ridge WSA is located about five miles north of Three Rivers and about 24 miles northeast of Visalia in Tulare County. The WSA includes 5,102 acres of BLM lands (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The WSA borders the western boundary of the Sequoia National Park. Portions of the west and southwest edges border a maintained road along Sheep Creek. Part of the eastern boundary abuts the maintained road along the north fork of the Kaweah River. The remaining boundaries are formed by private lands.

The landscape is dominated by a six and one-half mile rugged, steep ridge trending southeast-northwest, located between Sheep Creek and the north fork of the Kaweah River. Width varies from one to two miles. Dense chaparral covers the drier, south-facing slopes. Scattered oaks and grasses cover the remaining slopes. Some small canyons dissect the flanks of the ridge, and a small creek traverses the unit from west to east, separating Sheep Ridge from Burnt Point Mountain in the northern section of the WSA.

The WSA was studied under Section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Suitability recommendations were analyzed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Central California Study Areas and in the Final EIS for the Central California Section 202 Wilderness Study Areas. A summary of the area's wilderness values was included in the Final EIS. Three different suitability recommendations were analyzed in the EIS: all-wilderness, no wilderness, and partial wilderness recommending 96% of the area suitable.

2.	<u>RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE</u> ---	0	acres recommended for wilderness
		5,102	BLM acres recommended for nonwilderness

No wilderness is the recommendation for this WSA. The entire acreage in the WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. The all-wilderness alternative is considered to be the environmentally preferred alternative as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The no-wilderness alternative will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The WSA is recommended nonsuitable. High recreational use at Cherry Falls, expansion of the grazing program, fire management plans, moderate potential for tungsten, and protection of the historic buildings at the Advance Colony site outweigh the area's wilderness values. The WSA does not adjoin any designated wilderness lands of other agencies. In addition, effective management of the area as wilderness would be difficult.

Approximately 600 visitor days per year are concentrated at Cherry Falls on the north fork of the Kaweah River in the southern tip of the WSA. Wilderness designation would close the one-quarter mile vehicle access route heading west from the North Fork Road to a parking area above Cherry Falls. This would cause severe parking problems along the North Fork Road as all visitors to Cherry Falls would then have to park along this narrow road. Serious congestion problems have occurred in the past when the one-quarter mile vehicle route was temporarily closed due to muddy conditions. This is the only route through this area. California Department of Forestry (CDF) fire emergency vehicles require unimpeded access along this route in order to gain passage to private and Federal National Park System (NPS) lands further north.

All or part of three grazing lease allotments comprise the majority of the acreage in the WSA. Season of use varies from year long to March through June. Under the no-wilderness proposal outlined in the Central California Section 202 Wilderness Study Areas Final EIS, livestock use, maintained at the existing level of 425 AUMs, would be improved by a 680-acre prescribed burn (to be repeated every ten years) proposed for the middle of the WSA to increase livestock forage by about 68 AUMs. Also, the installation of new water developments requiring the use of motorized vehicle access are planned.

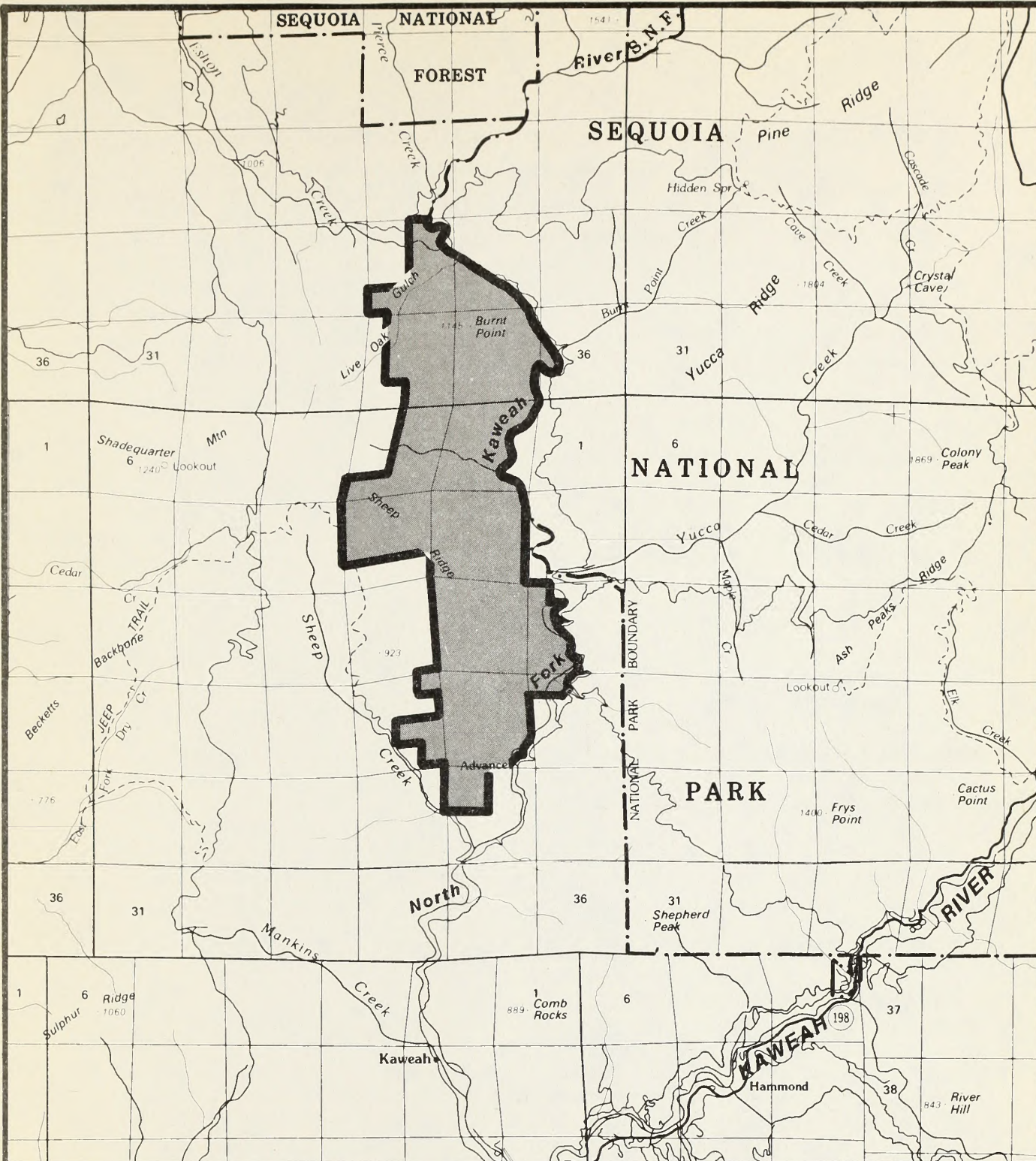
Fire management plans involve the use of mechanized equipment for suppression and presuppression activities under contract to the CDF. There is also a CDF fuel break in the northern end of the WSA that is maintained with the use of chemicals and motorized equipment.

A Level I mineral inventory was conducted of the WSA. Two areas with a moderate potential for tungsten were identified within the boundaries of the WSA.

A fence encloses one of the historic buildings at the Advance Colony site to protect the structure from vandalism and preserve its scenic and historic value for visitor appreciation. This fence, plus an additional one-half mile fence along the WSA boundary near Advance are maintained by motorized vehicle access.

The area's irregular shape, combined with a lack of topographical or cultural features to delineate the boundaries, would make managing the area as wilderness difficult. Extensive signing, and in some cases, fencing of the boundaries would be necessary. The narrowness, size, and steep ridge-like characteristics of the WSA also do not lend themselves to effective wilderness management.

There is approximately one-half mile of vehicle routes which would remain available for vehicular use.

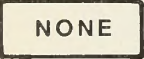



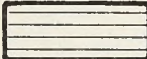
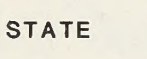



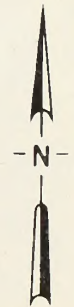
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|---|---|---|----------------------------|---|--------------|
|  | NONE |  | RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |  | SPLIT ESTATE |
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS |  | STATE |  | PRIVATE |
|  | LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS | | | | |



**Sheep Ridge
Proposal
MAP-1**



010-022
JUNE, 1988

TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	5,102
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
Total		5,102
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Study Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	5,102
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		5,102

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The WSA has retained a good degree of its natural character. A long, rugged, steep ridge dominates the area. The drier, south-facing slopes support a dense chaparral cover; the remaining slopes are covered with oaks and grasses. Small canyons dissect the flanks of the ridge, and a small creek runs across the middle of the unit west to east.

Imprints of man's activities include: a fuel break in the extreme northern corner of the WSA, a few primitive vehicle routes, the parking area at Cherry Falls, and the fencing and historic structures at the Advance Colony site. The noise and visual disturbance associated with the heavy recreational use at Cherry Falls adversely affects the naturalness of the WSA.

2. Solitude: The area's topographic variation, rugged terrain and vegetative variety combine to create areas of seclusion, particularly along the northeastern edge of the WSA when considered in conjunction with the adjacent NPS lands. Overall, the size and narrow, linear ridgeline character of the WSA make solitude and dispersal of recreational users difficult. Also, in the southern end of the WSA, intensive recreational use at Cherry Falls limits opportunities for solitude.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and unconfined recreation: Opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation exist in the WSA. Dense vegetation allows limited hunting and hiking. Cherry Falls, in the southern end of the WSA along the north fork of the Kaweah River, provides excellent opportunities for picnicking, swimming, fishing and other water-related activities.
4. Special features: The Sheep Ridge WSA contains one of the historic buildings of the Advance Colony site, part of the Kaweah Colony, a socialist utopian society formed in the 1880s. The Bureau has constructed a fence to protect the structure from vandalism and to preserve its scenic and historic value for visitors to the area.

B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS)

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 5,102 acres of the Sierran Forest/California Oakwoods ecosystem. The Sheep Ridge WSA would not increase the diversity of the types of ecosystems represented in the NWPS.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
Sierran Forest/ California Oakwoods	1	41,859	0	0
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
Sierran Forest/ California Oakwoods	1	41,859	0	0

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of 16 major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3 - Wilderness Opportunities for Residents of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	<u>NWPS areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>California</u>				
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,515
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Fresno	35	4,048,852	28	460,790
Los Angeles-Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
Merced	33	3,957,550	25	348,753
Modesto	36	4,126,963	81	1,722,326
Oxnard-Ventura	23	2,195,198	85	2,703,260
Sacramento	46	5,001,817	87	2,479,541
Salinas-Seaside-Monterey	24	3,676,896	45	644,415
San Francisco-Oakland	39	4,473,002	39	565,614
San Jose	27	3,765,512	29	352,748
Santa Barbara-Santa Maria- Lompoc	20	1,166,142	35	528,590
Santa Cruz	27	3,765,512	32	407,890
Stockton	35	4,061,833	46	601,496
Vallejo-Napa-Fairfield	44	4,832,667	74	2,100,862
Visalia-Tulare-Porterville	34	4,431,635	61	1,681,921

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA is within 50 air miles of one BLM WSA recommended for wilderness designation, Sacatar Meadows (CA-010-027). The land in the Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Park, just southeast of the parcel, is managed as wilderness. Other wilderness areas nearby are the Monarch-Sequoia and Sierra National Forests, Jennie Lakes-Sequoia National Forest, Dinkey Lakes-Sierra National Forest, and the John Muir-Inyo and Sierra National Forests.

C. Manageability

The Sheep Ridge WSA is manageable as wilderness but only with extreme difficulty. Manageability problems include the overall irregular shape with predominantly sectional (rather than topographic or cultural features) boundaries, leading to difficult recognition on the ground. Frequent signing, detailed maps, and intensive patrolling along various segments of the border would be required to insure the integrity of the unit. Recreational use at Cherry Falls and the maintenance of the CDF fuel break by chemicals and motorized equipment will hinder management of the area as wilderness. The narrowness of the WSA, its size, and the likelihood of intrusions from adjacent private lands pose additional management problems. Current management has proven effective in maintaining the area's existing resources.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of information known at the time of the preliminary suitability recommendation: The energy and mineral potential of the Sheep Ridge WSA addressed in the affected environment section of the Central California Section 202 Wilderness Study Areas, Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was taken from a 1982 BLM mineral assessment report (R. Waiwood, 1982, Level I Mineral Inventory Report for the Sheep Ridge Wilderness Study Area, BLM WSA File #010-022). The EIS indicates that the Sheep Ridge WSA is underlain predominantly by Mesozoic granitic rocks of the Sierra Nevada batholith. This rock unit is intruded into an older overlying Paleozoic metasedimentary sequence of marble, quartzite, slate and schist. This geologic environment favors the occurrence of hydrothermal vein-type deposits of gold and silver, and contact metamorphic/replacement deposits of barite and tungsten. Tungsten occurrences are known to be associated with granitic/metamorphic contacts two miles west of the WSA. The 1982 BLM report identified two areas with moderate potential for tungsten mineralization in the north-central and south-central parts of the WSA. The EIS contradicted the findings of the 1982 Mineral report and stated that development potential for tungsten for all portions of the WSA was low.

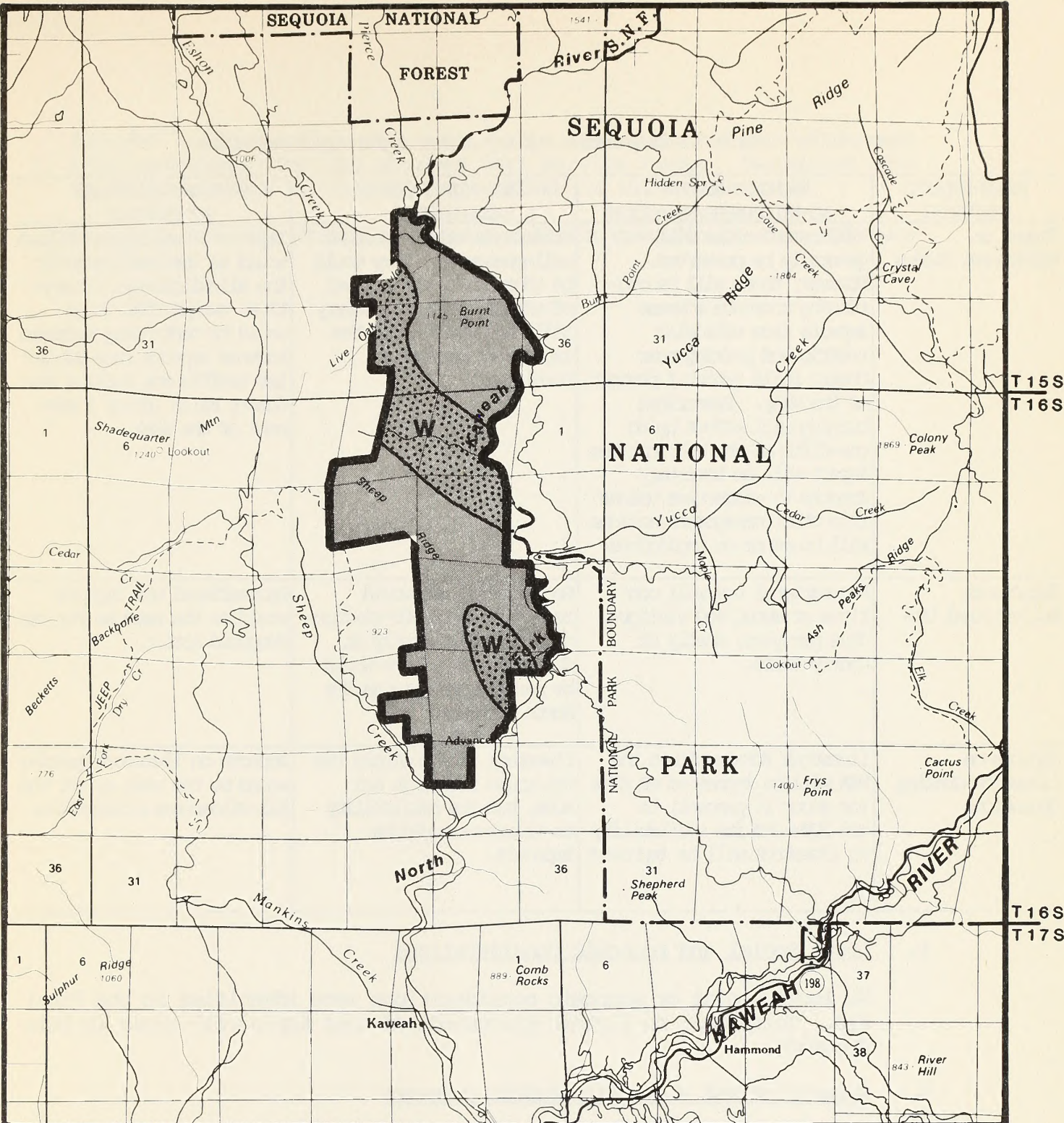
There were no known gold or metallic mineral occurrences within the WSA. The EIS considered the development potential for gold or other metallic minerals to be low. The geologic environment was not considered to be favorable for leasable minerals such as oil and gas or evaporites such as sodium, potassium or phosphate. Any common varieties of sand, stone, gravel, etc. that may exist in the WSA were considered to be too far from local markets and too difficult to access. Salable minerals were given a low development potential. BLM records dated April 8, 1987, identified no unpatented mining claims in the WSA.

2. Summary of significant new mineral resource data collected since the suitability recommendation which should be considered in the final recommendation: Because this WSA was recommended non-suitable by BLM, no U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) or U.S. Bureau of Mines (BOM) mineral surveys were conducted. As of March 25, 1988, BLM mining claim records revealed no mining claims, mineral leases or mineral material sales contracts/permits within the boundaries of the WSA.

The presence of tungsten skarn occurrences at some granitic/metamorphic contacts within the parts of this WSA indicates moderate potential for the occurrence of tungsten in these areas (see attached map) according to the BLM classification scheme. No new mineral resource information concerning this WSA has been generated as of May 3, 1988.

E. Impacts on Resources

The following table summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for all alternatives considered including designation or non-designation of the entire area as wilderness. (For a full explanation of this summary, refer to the Central California Section 202 Wilderness Study Areas - Final Environmental Impact Statement.)



R 27
E

R28E

R28E R29E

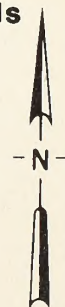
NONE	Recommended for Wilderness
	Recommended for Non Wilderness
	Land outside WSA Recommended for Wilderness
	Split Estate
	State
	Private

Explanation

	High Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals
	Moderate Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals
M	Moderate Mineral Potential Location in a High Mineral Potential Area
H	High Mineral Potential Location in a Moderate Mineral Potential Area

Commodity Symbols

W Tungsten



Sheep Ridge
Mineral Resource Potential



Map-2
010-022

Table 4 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	PARTIAL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impact on Wilderness Values	Wilderness values will generally be preserved. However, there will be continuing moderate adverse impacts from vehicular traffic and parking near Cherry Falls (about 1 percent of the WSA). Prescribed burning will affect up to one-fifth of the WSA, but the impact will be temporary. Impacts to wilderness values from other management actions will be minor or negligible.	Wilderness values would be well-preserved. They would be enhanced by the removal of vehicle access at Cherry Falls and would avoid the impacts of prescribed burning.	Impacts on wilderness values would be the same as under the all-wilderness alternative, except that there would be continuing moderate adverse impacts from vehicular traffic and parking near Cherry Falls (about 1 percent of the WSA).
Impacts on Recreational Use	Recreational use will continue at about 600 visitor-days per year, mostly at Cherry Falls.	Recreational use would remain at about 600 visitor-days per year, mostly at Cherry Falls. There would be parking problems on the North Fork Road.	Recreational use impacts would be the same as for the Proposed Action.
Impacts on Livestock Grazing Operations	Livestock forage within the WSA will be increased 68 AUMs (or about 15 percent) to 493 AUMs and its availability to livestock will be improved.	Livestock forage within the WSA would remain at 425 AUMs, but its availability to livestock would be improved.	Impacts on livestock grazing would be the same as for the All-wilderness Alternative.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

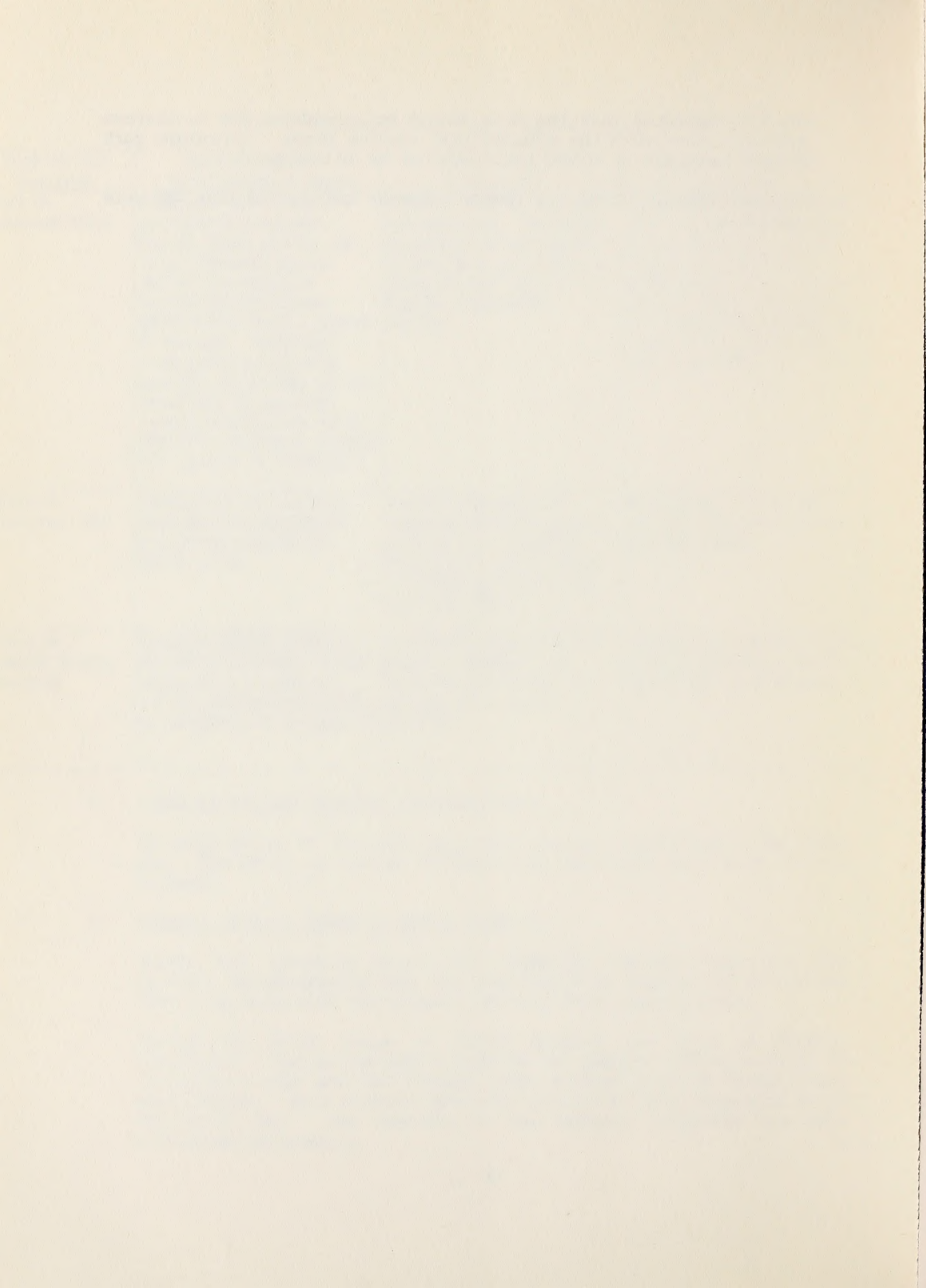
G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

During the inventory phase, all comments received supported the Bureau's recommendation that the area should be studied for wilderness when considered with the adjacent National Park Service lands.

During the study phase, a public hearing was held in Fresno, California. During the public hearing and comment period, a total of 74 comments both oral and written were received relative to the total study effort. Five comments specific to this WSA were responded to in the final EIS. The majority of the comments supported the all-wilderness alternative.

The NPS commented that the area should be considered for wilderness when considered with the adjacent park service lands. (Adjoining park service lands are no longer being studied for wilderness.)

No other Federal, State, or County comments specific to this WSA were received.



Milk Ranch Case Mountain

CA-010-023

MILK RANCH/CASE MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CA-010-023)

1. THE STUDY AREA --- 8,970 acres

The Milk Ranch/Case Mountain WSA consists of four separate parcels spanning a distance of 15 miles in Tulare County. The four parcels are: North Fork, Milk Ranch, Case Mountain, and South. The northernmost parcel is approximately six miles north of Three Rivers and the southernmost parcel is about nine miles southeast of Three Rivers (or thirty miles east of Visalia). The WSA includes 8,970 acres of BLM lands. No private holdings are located within the WSA (see Map 1 and Table 1).

All four parcels of the WSA are bounded on the east by Sequoia National Park lands. The North Fork parcel is bounded on the west by the Tulare County-maintained North Fork Road and private land, on the north by private land, and on the southwest by an unpaved California Department of Forestry (CDF)-maintained road. The Milk Ranch Peak parcel is bounded on the north and east by Sequoia National Park and private land, on the west by private land, and on the southwest by the Mineral King Road. The Case Mountain parcel is bounded by Case Mountain Road and private lands on the west, by private lands and part of a jeep trail on the north, and by private lands on the south and partially on the east. Private land bounds the south parcel on the north, south, and west.

Topography and vegetation vary from parcel to parcel within the WSA. The landscape changes from rocky, rounded, steep slopes to low, rounded hills and steep, forested slopes cut by gorges. Numerous intermittent creeks transect the area, supporting riparian growth along the banks. The North Fork parcel is primarily covered by oak woodland with some open grasslands on the western edge; higher elevations are covered with mixed chaparral. Mixed chaparral covers most of the Milk Ranch parcel; some mixed conifer and oak woodlands grow near the National Park Service (NPS) Milk Ranch Peak lookout. The north-facing slopes of the Case Mountain parcel support mixed conifers and an anomalous small grove of Giant Sequoia redwoods; dense chaparral covers the remaining area. The South parcel consists of mostly densely-covered chaparral slopes.

The WSA was studied under Section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Suitability recommendations were analyzed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Central California Study Areas and in the Final EIS for the Central California Section 202 Wilderness Study Areas. A summary of the area's wilderness values was included in the Final EIS. Two different suitability recommendations were analyzed in the EIS: all wilderness and no wilderness.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE ---

0 acres recommended
for wilderness
8,970 BLM acres recommended for
non-wilderness

No wilderness is the recommendation for this WSA. The entire acreage in the WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. The all-wilderness alternative is considered to be the environmentally preferred alternative as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The no-wilderness alternative will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The WSA is recommended non-suitable. The lack of legal public access, fire management plans, continuance of the range management program, high potential for forest products, size, and the discrete blocky nature of the WSA outweigh the area's wilderness values. Only one parcel adjoins wilderness lands of the NPS; the other NPS lands bordering the WSA are not being studied for wilderness suitability. In addition, effective management of the areas as wilderness would be difficult.

Lack of legal public access severely limits recreational opportunities within the WSA. The North Fork, Milk Ranch, and Case Mountain parcels all have access roads to the WSA boundary, but the roads cross private lands and, therefore, are not open for public use. Only the North Fork parcel has legal public access along the Tulare County-maintained North Fork Road, but here the small size and heavy chaparral cover severely limit recreational opportunities. There is no road to the south parcel.

Fire management plans involve the use of mechanized equipment for suppression and suppression activities which are under contract with the CDF. In addition, the removal of ladder fuels around the larger trees in the Giant Sequoia grove on the Case Mountain parcel may require the use of mechanized equipment. As proposed in the South Sierra Foothills Management Framework Plan, the high scenic, human interest, and scientific values of these trees need to be safeguarded against major fires.

All but the South parcel is managed for forage for livestock and deer. All or part of five grazing allotments make up the WSA with season of use varying from year-long to March through June. Livestock use, maintained at the existing level of 424 AUMs, will be increased by an 800-acre prescribed burn (to be repeated every 10 to 15 years in the Case Mountain parcel) to improve forage by about 80 AUMs. This will also benefit the Mineral King deer herd which forages in this area during the critical winter months. In addition, spring developments for wildlife and livestock use will require continued motorized vehicle access. With this recommendation there is 1 1/2 mile of route of travel which will remain available for vehicular use.

Timber management on the Case Mountain parcel requires the use of mechanized equipment, especially for pest management. Wilderness designation would constrain methods of control for the Ips beetle (infecting the Ponderosa pines in the Case Mountain and Milk Ranch parcels) resulting in an increased risk of disease and death of a large number of trees. Logging already occurs on adjacent private lands. Sustained Yield Unit (SYU)-15 recommends some parcels of the WSA for Intensive Timber Management, providing it is economically feasible. Besides local socio-economic value, there is a high potential for forest products.

The split parcel nature of the WSA makes manageability of its wilderness values extremely difficult. The four parcels lack sufficient size and manageable configurations to make practical their preservation and use in an unimpaired condition.

Only one parcel, Milk Ranch, borders an area of wilderness. The other three parcels adjoin Sequoia National Park land that has not been recommended for wilderness designation. Local NPS personnel concur that the non-wilderness proposal is compatible with current park management plans.

The irregular shape, combined with a lack of topographical or cultural features to delineate the boundaries, would make managing the area as wilderness difficult. Extensive signing, and in specific cases, fencing of the boundaries would be necessary. Vehicular trespass from adjacent private lands presents management problems. The small size and split parcel nature of the WSA does not lend itself to effective wilderness management.

TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

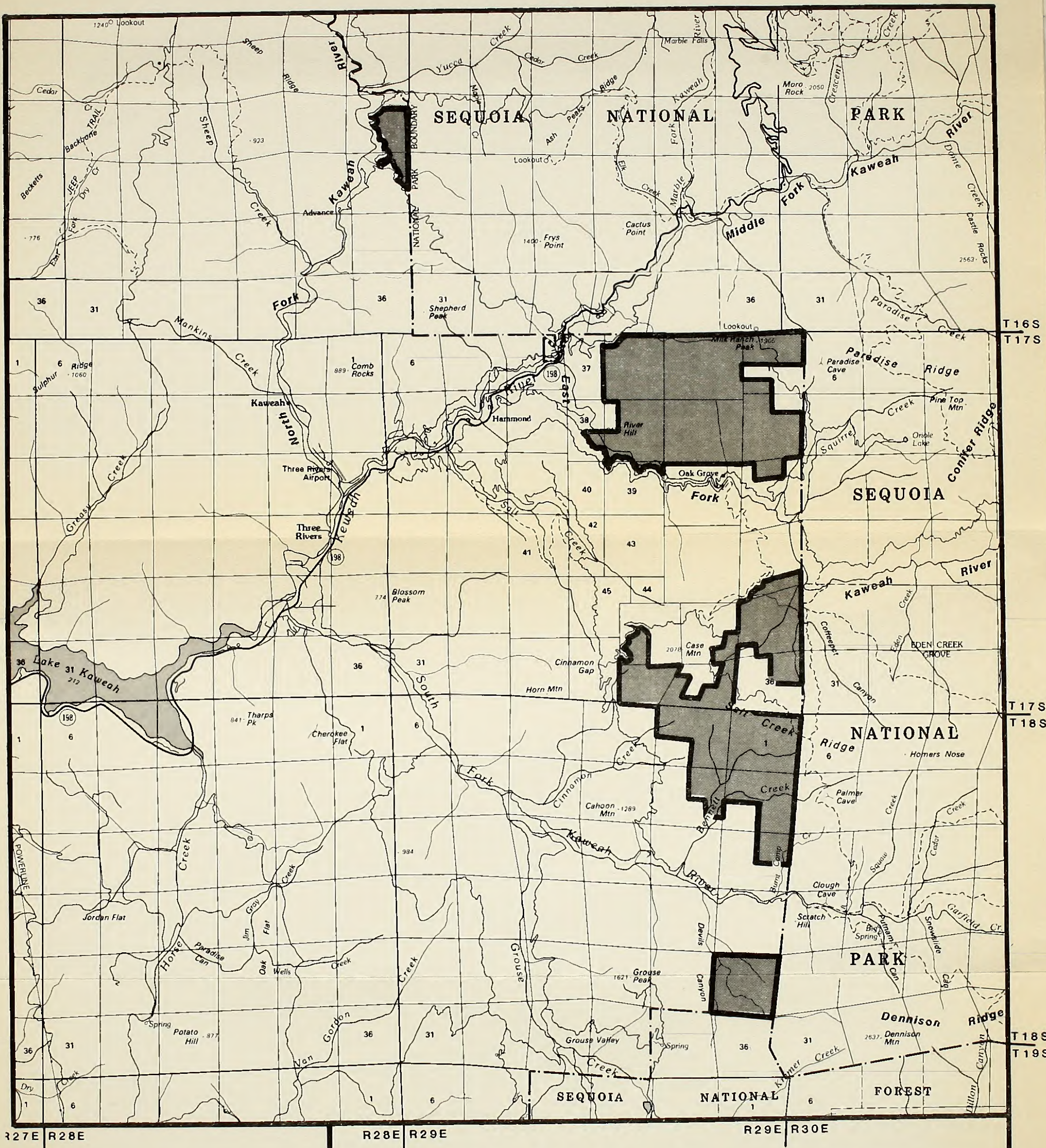
<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	8,970
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
Total		<u>8,970</u>
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Study Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<u>0</u>
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	8,970
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>8,970</u>

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The WSA has retained a good degree of its natural character. The landscape alternates from rocky, rounded, steep slopes to low, rounded hills and steep, forested slopes cut by gorges. Vegetation varies with topography; the lower hills support oak woodland and scattered chaparral communities, and the higher mountains support coniferous forests with a small grove of Giant Sequoia on the Case Mountain parcel. Numerous intermittent creeks transect the area, supporting riparian growth along the banks.

A few primitive vehicle routes are the only imprints of man's activities. A graded logging road (erroneously omitted from the original wilderness inventory map) runs through the Case Mountain parcel, dividing the parcel into two separate parcels and leading to an intricate network of logging roads and skid trails. There



- | | | | |
|------|---|--|--------------|
| NONE | RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS | | SPLIT ESTATE |
| | RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS | | STATE |
| | LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS | | PRIVATE |

Milk Ranch/Case Mountain
Proposal
MAP-1

0 1 2 3
MILES

010-023
JUNE, 1988

is also a road in the northeastern corner of the Milk Ranch parcel. Overall, with access limited by private land boundaries and rugged terrain, human encroachment has been minimal. Logging practices on Case Mountain and traffic along the Case Mountain and North Fork boundary roads detract from the naturalness of the WSA.

2. Solitude: Vegetative and terrain diversity within each parcel provide some opportunities for solitude through their screening effect; but the scattered nature and irregular configuration of these four small WSA parcels, as well as the penetrating nature (and closeness) of adjacent private lands, limit opportunities for solitude. Traffic along the North Fork and Case Mountain roads and logging on Case Mountain negatively impact the WSA's solitude.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and unconfined recreation: As with solitude, the irregular configurations, and small parcel sizes of bordering private lands hamper opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation within the WSA. A lack of legal public access also limits recreation in the WSA. The WSA is used for an estimated 100 visitor days per year, mostly in the form of hunting and some hiking, along the North Fork parcel. The bordering NPS lands are rugged and without trails.
4. Special features: The Giant Sequoia in the Case Mountain parcel are unique. They possess high scenic, human interest, and scientific value. The area also contains critical winter range for the Mineral King deer herd.

B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS)

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 5,380 acres of the Sierran Forest/Mixed Conifer Forest and 3,590 acres of the Sierran Forest/Chaparral ecosystem. The Milk Ranch/Case Mountain WSA would not increase the diversity of the types of ecosystems represented in the NWPS.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
Sierran Forest/ Mixed Conifer Forest	26	1,772,907	13	143,531
Chaparral	8	68,312	1	12,959
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
Sierran Forest/ Mixed Conifer Forest	26	1,772,907	1	550
Chaparral	8	68,312	1	12,959

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of 16 major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3 - Wilderness Opportunities for Residents of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	<u>NWPS areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>California</u>				
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,515
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Fresno	35	4,048,852	28	460,790
Los Angeles-Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
Merced	33	3,957,550	25	348,753
Modesto	36	4,126,963	81	1,722,326
Oxnard-Ventura	23	2,195,198	85	2,703,260
Sacramento	46	5,001,817	87	2,479,541
Salinas-Seaside-Monterey	24	3,676,896	45	644,415
San Francisco-Oakland	39	4,473,002	39	565,614
San Jose	27	3,765,512	29	352,748
Santa Barbara-Santa Maria- Lompoc	20	1,166,142	35	528,590
Santa Cruz	27	3,765,512	32	407,890
Stockton	35	4,061,833	46	601,496
Vallejo-Napa-Fairfield	44	4,832,667	74	2,100,862
Visalia-Tulare-Porterville	34	4,431,635	61	1,681,921

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA is within 50 air miles of one BLM WSA recommended for wilderness designation, Sacatar Meadows (CA-010-027). The land in the Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Park, just north of the Milk Ranch parcel, is managed as wilderness. Other wilderness areas nearby are: the Monarch-Sequoia and Sierra National Forests, Jennie Lakes-Sequoia National Forest, Dinkey Lakes-Sierra National Forest, and the John Muir-Inyo and Sierra National Forests.

C. Manageability

The Milk Ranch/Case Mountain WSA is manageable as wilderness but only with extreme difficulty. Manageability problems include the overall irregular shape with predominantly sectional (rather than topographic or cultural feature) boundaries, leading to difficult recognition on the ground. Frequent signing, detailed maps, and intensive patrolling along various segments of the border would be required to insure the integrity of the unit. The small individual parcels of the WSA and the adjacent private lands hinder effective management of the area as wilderness. In addition, vehicular trespass from these bordering private lands could be a problem.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of information known at the time of the preliminary suitability recommendation: The geology and mineralization of the Milk Ranch/Case Mountain WSA is addressed in the Affected Environment Section of the California Section 202 Wilderness Study Areas Final Environmental Impact Statement, 1987 (EIS). Although no G-E-M report was prepared, a literature search of mineral inventory was made by BLM staff in 1986 (L. Vredenberg, Geology and Mineral Resources of the Milk Ranch/Case Mountain Wilderness Study Area). The EIS states that the potential for minerals is low.

The 1982 mineral inventory states that the WSA is generally within the limits of the Sierra Nevada Batholith, geologic province. The Sierra Nevada Batholith is a Mesozoic granitic rock unit that has intruded into older Paleozoic metamorphosed sedimentary rocks including marble, quartzite, slate and schist. Within the Case Mountain parcel, sections 1, 12 and 13 are metasediments that are in contact with the granite. These granite/metamorphic rock contact zones are possible sources of tungsten mineralization. However, the lack of interest in the area coupled with the extreme localization of contact zones led to the determination of low potential for the occurrence of locatable mineral resources using the BLM mineral classification scheme.

The Bureau's mining claim index of April 8, 1987 listed one placer mining claim (CA MC 161815) in section 11, T. 17 S., R. 19 E., MDM. Due to the apparent lack of assessment work this claim was considered abandoned and void by BLM in January 1988.

The EIS does not address the potential for oil and gas or other leasable minerals. The 1982 mineral investigation states that the geologic environment of this WSA is not favorable for the occurrence of leasable minerals such as oil, gas and evaporates. The EIS does not address salable minerals (sand, gravel, etc.). The 1982 mineral report states that the WSA is remote and access is difficult to nonexistent. Because of poor accessibility, development potential for salable minerals was determined to be low.

2. Summary of significant new mineral resource data collected since the suitability recommendation, which should be considered in the final recommendation: Because the WSA has been or was recommended non-suitable by BLM, no mineral surveys were conducted by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) or U.S. Bureau of Mines (BOM). There has been no new data generated since the 1987 EIS was published. No mining claims exist within the boundaries of the WSA according to BLM records dated April 1, 1988. Because the WSA has only a low potential for the occurrence of mineral resources, no mineral potential map was prepared for this document.

E. Impacts on Resources

The following table summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for all alternatives considered including designation or non-designation of the entire area as wilderness. (For a full explanation of this summary, refer to the Central California Section 202 Study Areas - Wilderness Final Environmental Impact Statement.)

Table 4 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION NO WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impact on Wilderness Values	The wilderness values of the WSA as a whole will receive minor to negligible impacts. Most of the impacts (such as those from OHV use of the one-quarter mile trail in the North Fork parcel and the spring developments) will be very localized. Prescribed burning will disrupt naturalness on 15 percent of the area for some visitors every 10-15 years, but the impact will be temporary (less than two years).	Impacts on wilderness values would be the same as under the Proposed Action, except that there would be no impact from OHV use and the impacts from prescribed burning would be reduced over 95 percent (less than one percent of the WSA would be affected).
Impacts on Timber Resources	The Giant Sequoia trees in the Case Mountain parcel will face a moderately reduced risk of wildfire.	The impact on timber resources would be the same as under the Proposed Action.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

During the inventory phase, the majority of the comments received supported the wilderness study of the area. A few comments addressing wildlife values in the area were considered. One comment indicated the existence of a concrete conduit in the Milk Ranch parcel; a subsequent field check resulted in the exclusion of the conduit from the WSA.

During the study phase, a public hearing was held in Fresno, California. During the public hearing and comment period, a total of 74 comments, both oral and written, were received relative to the total study effort. Five comments specific to this WSA were responded to in the final EIS. The majority of the comments supported the all-wilderness alternative.

The NPS commented that the area met the wilderness study criteria and should be studied for wilderness. Subsequent discussions with personnel of Sequoia National Park indicated that only one BLM parcel is now up against park lands managed as wilderness. The NPS further stated that the Giant Sequoia trees should be protected.

The Sequoia National Forest commented on the location and acreage associated with the unit.

No comments specific to this WSA were received from State or County agencies.

Owens Peak

CA-010-026

OWENS PEAK WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CA-010-026)

1. THE STUDY AREA --- 25,514 acres

The WSA is located in eastern Kern County, occupying the western edge of the Sierra Crest, approximately 25 miles west of the town of Ridgecrest, California. The WSA includes 24,128 acres of BLM land and 1,386 acres of private land (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The WSA is bounded on the north by Nine Mile Canyon Road, on the south by Highway 178, on the east by the California Desert District boundary, and on the west by the Canebrake Road. The Owens Peak WSA (CDCA-158) borders this WSA along its eastern edge, a portion of which has been recommended suitable for wilderness.

The WSA consists of rocky, steep slopes along the west face of the Sierra Nevada Crest and rolling terrain interspersed by meadows at lower elevation levels. A unique ecotone formed by the convergence of five vegetative types is found here. The primary vegetative type is pinyon; in addition, there are outstanding examples of Joshua tree woodland near the Walker Pass area, big sage/rabbitbrush associations and mixed conifer at the higher elevations.

The WSA is part of the Monache-Walker Pass National Cooperative Land and Wildlife Management Area (NCLWMA), established in 1962 through Public Land Order No. 2594. It is managed by BLM in cooperation with the California Department of Fish and Game (CDF&G) for the benefit of the wildlife resources. Both agencies have been involved in habitat improvement projects, especially water developments, which have significantly improved the habitat for upland game species.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Suitability recommendations were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Central California Study Areas. A summary of the area's wilderness values was included in the Final EIS. Three different suitability recommendations were analyzed in the EIS: all wilderness, partial wilderness (recommending 64% of the area as suitable), and no wilderness.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE --- 16,399 acres recommended for wilderness
8,231 BLM acres recommended for nonwilderness

Sixty-four percent partial wilderness is the recommendation for this WSA - 8,231 acres in this WSA are released for uses other than wilderness. This recommendation is in accordance with the South Sierra Foothills Management Framework Plan/South Sierra Foothills Grazing Management EIS, dated 1983.

In addition to the Federal acreage recommended for wilderness, 368 acres of private land will be acquired through exchange or purchase and designated as wilderness. With acquisition of these inholdings, a total of 16,399 acres are recommended for wilderness. Appendix 1 lists the inholdings and provides additional information on their acquisition. The all-wilderness alternative is considered to be the environmentally-preferred alternative as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The 64% partial wilderness alternative will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

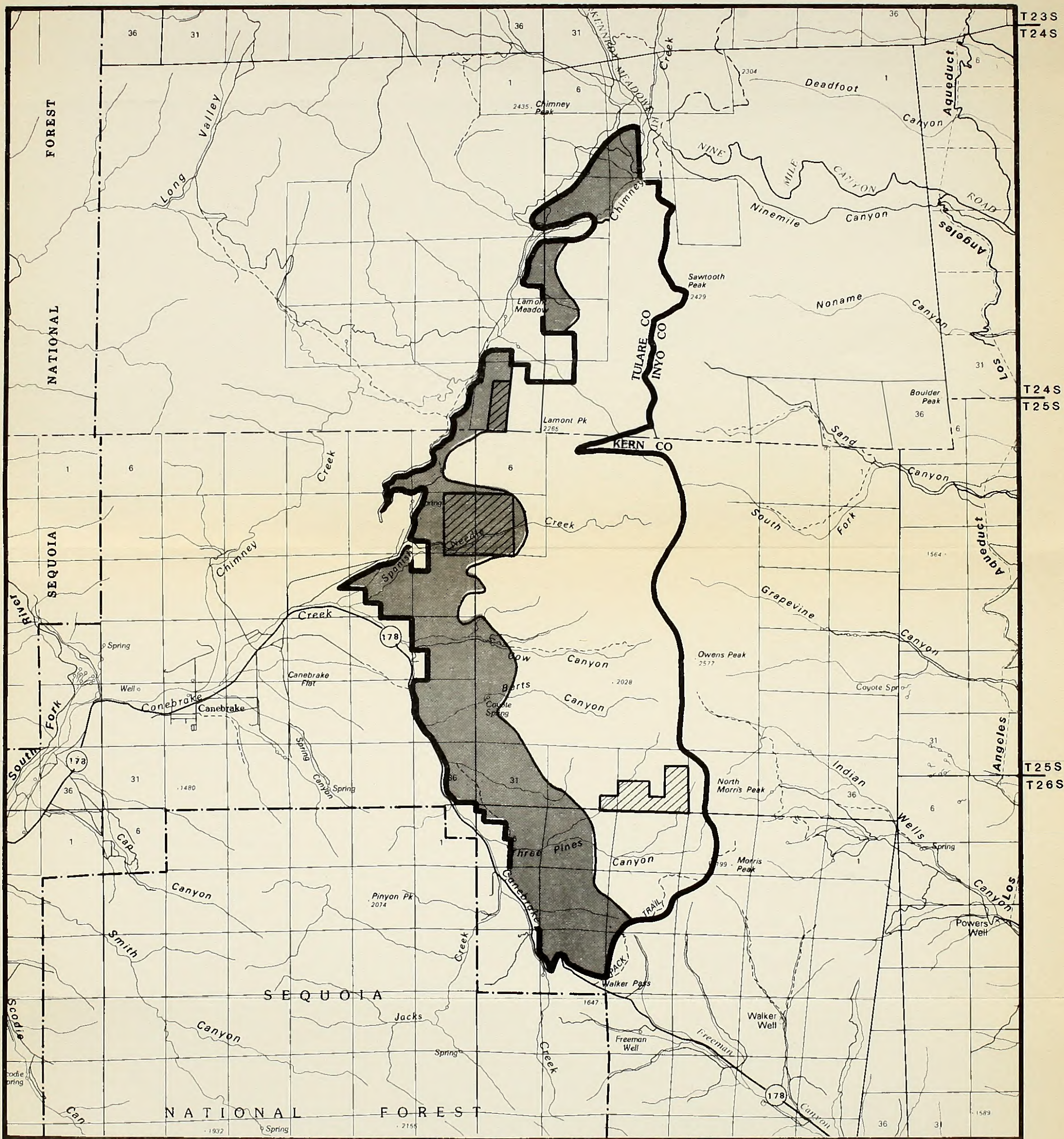
Partial wilderness is the recommendation for this unit based on the following rationale: the lands proposed are an example of a unique ecotone, eleven candidate plant species occur in the recommended area, a portion of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail traverses the unit, and the wilderness characteristics for the area are outstanding. With the deletion of those parcels proposed, manageability and resource conflicts will be reduced.

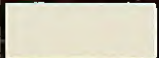





The proposed wilderness area is located in an ecotone between pinyon-juniper woodland, sagebrush scrub, foothill woodland, Joshua tree woodland, and yellow pine forest vegetative types. It is characterized by pinyon-juniper covered slopes in the higher elevations and mixed desert shrubs with annual plants in the lower elevations. Occasional pockets of scrub oak and coniferous forest occur on the crest of the Sierra Nevada near the east side of the WSA. Particularly unique to the area are the eleven candidate plant species that occur in the unit. Four of these species have been discovered since 1984.

Overall, the wilderness characteristics for the area are outstanding. The imprint of man's work is substantially unnoticeable throughout the unit. A variety of steep canyons and small ridges serve to isolate the visitor from outside sounds and provide excellent opportunities for solitude. One special feature which offers the public an opportunity to view the WSA, is the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail which winds 23 miles through the unit.

For manageability reasons and other resource values, the following parcels were not included in the area recommended for wilderness. Removal of the parcel north of Chimney Creek is recommended as non-suitable for wilderness designation. This will eliminate the irregular boundary and narrow, protruding portions of the WSA while utilizing easily identifiable boundary features. This exclusion also meets the demand for vehicular access for historical pinyon nut and Christmas-tree harvesting. The removal of the parcel on the western boundary would enhance the manageability of the area. This adjustment includes eliminating 884 acres of non-public inholdings and portions of the irregular boundary. The remaining private inholding in sections 32 and 33, T. 25 S., R. 37 E., MDM, would be acquired to prevent incompatible development and the need for vehicular access. The parcel to be removed on the southern boundary would also improve manageability. The area is now receiving use by OHVs along the canyons and has a high potential for OHV use along Highway 178. There are approximately 12 miles of routes

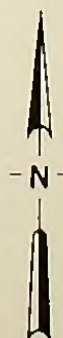
of travel including primitive ways, washes and other unmaintained routes of access included within this WSA. The boundary is relocated to points where, because of the topography, vehicular access can be controlled and the wilderness values maintained.



- | | | | |
|---|---|---|--------------|
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |  | SPLIT ESTATE |
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS |  | STATE |
|  | LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |  | PRIVATE |

**Owens Peak
Proposal
MAP-1**

0 1 2 3
MILES



010-026
JUNE, 1988

TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	24,128
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		1,386
Total		<u>25,514</u>
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Study Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	15,897
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<u>15,897</u>
Inholdings ¹		
State		0
Private		502
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	8,231
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>8,231</u>

¹Appendix 1 is a detailed description of inholdings and split-estate tracts included within the study. For purposes of this report, split-estate lands are defined only as those lands with Federal surface and non-Federal subsurface (minerals). Lands that have Federal minerals but non-Federal surface should be classified in this report by the owner of the surface estate.

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The unit displays a unique melting of vegetative types. The primary vegetative type is pinyon; however, there are outstanding examples of Joshua tree woodland near the Walker Pass area, big sage/rabbitbrush associations and mixed conifer at the higher elevations. Where these vegetative types come together, interesting and unusual combinations of plants can be seen growing in association with one another. The imprint of man's work is substantially unnoticeable throughout the unit.
2. Solitude: The large size of this unit, combined with the excellent and diverse topographic and vegetative screening provide outstanding opportunities for solitude. Those areas where solitude would be impacted adjacent to Highway 178, are outside of the recommended suitable area.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and unconfined recreation: The area offers good opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation. The Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail enhances the access to the area. Recently, water sources adjacent to the trail were located, thus making this segment easier to hike in its entirety.
4. Special features: Eleven candidate plant species occur within the unit, four having been discovered since 1984. Also as discussed, the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail traverses the entire length of the unit.

B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS)

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 24,128 acres of the Sierran Forest/Juniper-Pinyon Woodland ecosystem. Wilderness designation of this WSA would add a new ecosystem to the NWPS. The Sierran Forest Province/Juniper-Pinyon Woodland community is not currently represented in the NWPS.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
Sierran Forest/ Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	0	0	5	30,872
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
Sierran Forest/ Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	0	0	5	30,872

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of 10 major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3 - Wilderness Opportunities for Residents of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	<u>NWPS areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>California</u>				
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,515
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Fresno	35	4,048,852	28	460,790
Los Angeles-Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
Merced	33	3,957,550	25	348,753
Modesto	36	4,126,963	81	1,722,326
Oxnard-Ventura	23	2,195,198	85	2,703,260
Riverside-San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
Santa Barbara-Santa Maria- Lompoc	20	1,166,142	35	528,590
Visalia-Tulare-Porterville	34	4,431,635	61	1,681,921

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA is within 50 air miles of six BLM WSAs recommended for wilderness designation or partial designation; Sacatar Meadows (CA-010-027), Rockhouse (CA-010-029), Little Lake Canyon (CDCA-157), Owens Peak (CDCA-158), El Paso Mountains (CDCA-164), and Golden Valley (CDCA-170). Four miles to the west of the WSA is the Domeland Wilderness Area and five miles to the northwest

lies the South Sierra Wilderness Area. Both of these units are managed by the Sequoia National Forest.

C. Manageability

The area recommended is manageable as wilderness. No major conflicting uses occur within this area. With the boundary adjustments recommended, resource conflicts will be reduced to a minimum, thus allowing for the effective management of this area as wilderness. Over the long term, enhanced knowledge of visitor use patterns along the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail will enable BLM to monitor and develop management guidelines for the trail.

There have been no conflicts over water rights to the area's streams and springs in the past and none are anticipated in the future. The springs are withdrawn as Public Water Reserve 107's and the Federal water interest has been identified to the State of California, Division of Water Rights. The streams form the headwaters of their watersheds and have not been diverted within the WSA. A developed spring source, within a short distance of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail, will provide treatable drinking water.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of information known at the time of the preliminary suitability recommendation: The geology and mineral resources for the Owens Peak Wilderness Study Area are described in the Affected Environment Section of the BLM 1987 Wilderness Recommendations, Central California Study Areas EIS. The EIS description is based largely on a 1982 BLM minerals inventory (BLM Memorandum, March 2, 1982 Mineral Inventory Report: Owens Peak Wilderness Study Area, (CA-010-032). The EIS indicates that there are occurrences of gold, tungsten, zinc and possibly copper in the WSA but that no economic concentrations of these minerals were known. It also identified occurrences of decomposed granite, a salable mineral material, but concluded these deposits were too inaccessible and too far from local markets to have any value. The WSA was considered to have no potential for oil and gas or geothermal resources based on its geologic environment. The EIS indicates there has been no history of prospecting or production within the WSA, but that 16 unpatented mining claims were on record with BLM in 1986.

The BLM mineral inventory report (BLM memorandum), determined that the majority of the WSA is underlain by granitic intrusive rocks associated with the Sierra Nevada batholith. The WSA also contains several roof pendants with associated skarn deposits. Claims were located throughout the WSA, but were mostly

concentrated in the central portion. Claim activity around the Golden Age Prospect is concentrated in the vicinity of contact metasomatic tungsten skarn deposits. Several of the areas under mining claims were noted to have been extensively prospected, contrary to what is said in the EIS.

2. Summary of significant new mineral resource data collected since the suitability recommendation, which should be considered in the final recommendation: The United States Geological Survey (USGS) and the U.S. Bureau of Mines (BOM) conducted mineral surveys of the WSA from 1982 to 1985. The results of those surveys were published in USGS Bulletin 1705-A titled The Mineral Resources of the Owens Peak Wilderness Study Area, Tulare and Kern Counties, California. This report indicates the existence of two areas having moderate potential for the occurrence of tungsten mineralization. This tungsten mineralization extends into both the suitable and non-suitable portions of the WSA.

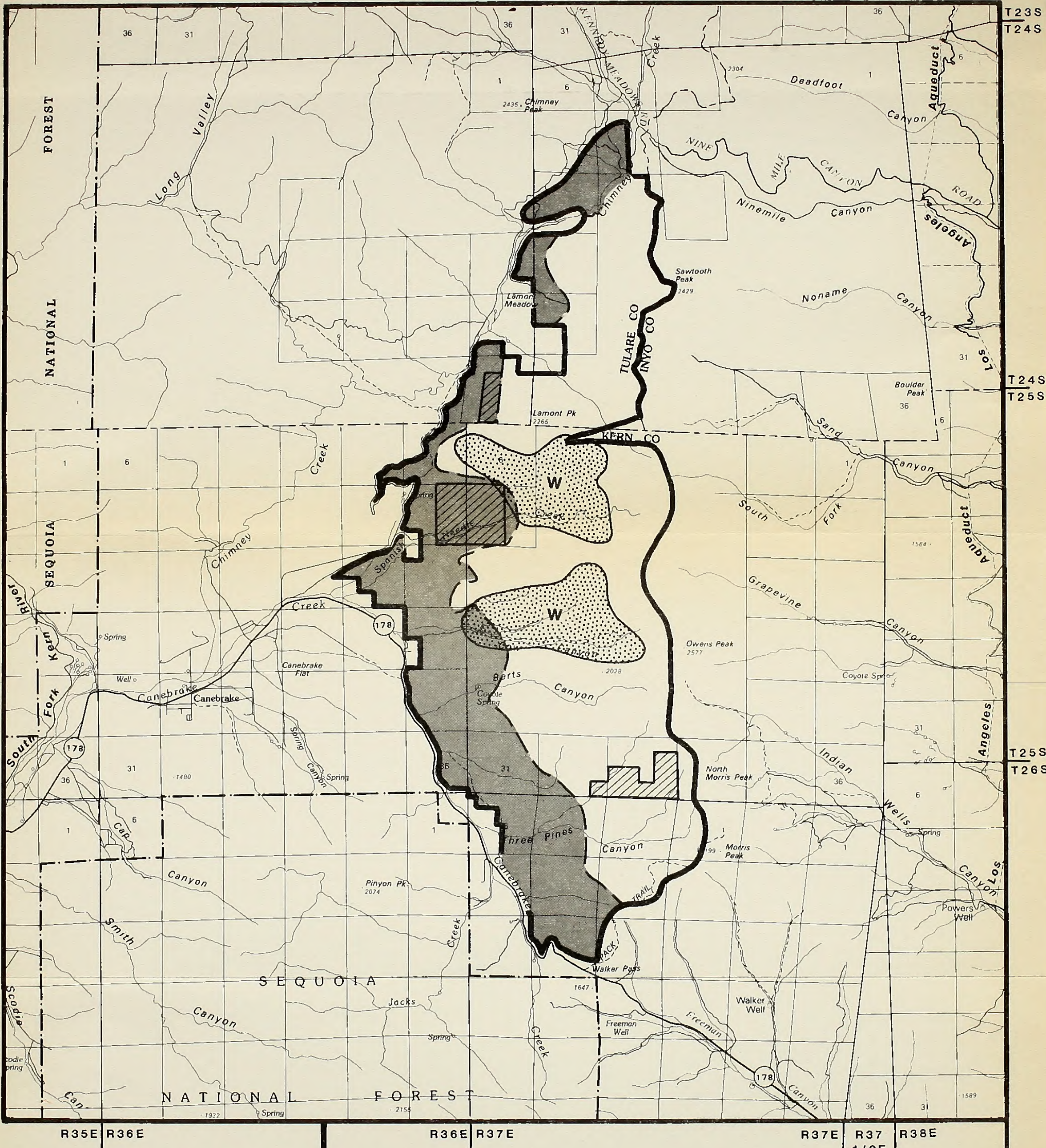
The accompanying map shows these areas of upgraded mineral occurrence potential which are largely associated with roof pendants of metamorphic rocks (skarn bodies) and pegmatite dikes.

USGS and BOM concluded that there are primarily four areas having mineral resource potential in the WSA. The Burnt House Canyon area has a moderate potential for the occurrence of tungsten, and low potential for copper and zinc. The Spanish Needle Creek area has a moderate potential for the occurrence of tungsten, and a low potential for lead. The canyon east of Lamont Meadow and west of Sand Canyon has a low potential for the occurrence of tungsten, copper and barite. The area of lower Three Pines Canyon has a low potential for the occurrence of tungsten and copper. For clarity, only the moderate mineral resource potential areas are shown on the accompanying mineral potential map (see Map 2).

BLM records as of May 6, 1988, indicate there are 17 lode mining claims remaining in the WSA, nine in the suitable portion and eight in the non-suitable portion. No mineral leases or mineral material sales contracts/permits have been issued in this WSA. The distribution of unpatented mining claims is shown in Table 4:

Table 4 - Mining Claims

TYPE	NUMBER			ACRES		
	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL
MINING CLAIMS						
Lode	7	1	8	140	20	160
Placer	2	7	9	80	280	360
Mill Sites	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	9	8	17	220	300	520



<div><div></div>Recommended for Wilderness</div> <div><div></div>Recommended for Non Wilderness</div> <div><div></div>Land outside WSA Recommended for Wilderness</div> <div><div></div>Split Estate</div> <div><div></div>State</div> <div><div></div>Private</div>	<div><div></div>High Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals</div> <div><div></div>Moderate Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals</div> <div><div>M</div>Moderate Mineral Potential Location in a High Mineral Potential Area</div> <div><div>H</div>High Mineral Potential Location in a Moderate Mineral Potential Area</div>	<div>Explanation</div> <div>Commodity Symbols</div> <div>W Tungsten</div>
<div>Owens Peak Mineral Resource Potential</div>		<div>0 1 2 3 MILES</div> <div>Map-2 010-026</div>

E. Impacts on Resources

The following table summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for all alternatives considered including designation or non-designation of the entire area as wilderness. (For a full explanation of this summary, refer to the Central California Study Areas - Wilderness Final Environmental Impact Statement.)

Table 5 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (PARTIAL-WILDERNESS)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	NO-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impact on Wilderness Values	<p>Wilderness designation of this area would result in a minor positive benefit to wilderness values particularly naturalness and solitude as a result of closing this area to recreational OHV use and mineral development. Also, restricting the use of mechanized equipment for fire suppression would slightly benefit naturalness.</p> <p>Generally, wilderness values would be retained throughout the WSA with the exception of mineral development including a loss of naturalness on approximately 50 acres. Additionally, placer and lode mining activities would impair the perception of naturalness and sense of solitude on 1,250 acres surrounding the mine sites. The Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail, a special feature of the WSA, would be slightly enhanced by closure of the designated portion to vehicular use. Long-term security from unanticipated adverse future actions would be provided to the area recommended for wilderness.</p>	<p>Under the All-Wilderness Alternative wilderness values would be retained and slightly enhanced within the total WSA. Naturalness and solitude would particularly benefit from eliminating 650 visitor days of recreational OHV use and prohibiting mineral development. As a special feature of the WSA, the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail would be slightly enhanced as a result of closing the WSA to recreational OHV use. In addition, long-term security from unanticipated adverse actions would be provided.</p>	<p>There would be a minor impact to wilderness values within the WSA as a result of increased OHV use from the current 650 visitor days to 1,000 visitor days. Additionally, low-level exploration and development of mineral resources on 16 placer and lode mining claims would result in a loss of naturalness on 80 acres as well as an impairment of the WSA's perception of naturalness and sense of solitude within 2,000 acres in the western portion of the WSA. Increased OHV use would disrupt hiking and backpacking use on the PCNST and increase the threat of vehicle use on the trail.</p>

Table 5 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative (cont.)

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (PARTIAL-WILDERNESS)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	NO-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impact on Recreational OHV Use	Recreational OHV use of 50 visitor days annually would be foregone within the designated portion of the WSA. The impact of this action on recreational OHV use would be negligible because of the similar opportunities available on public lands outside the WSA and the relatively small amount of use displaced. Approximately 600 visitor days of recreational OHV use annually would continue within the non-designated portion of the WSA.	Recreational OHV use of 650 visitor days annually would be foregone. The impact of this action on recreational OHV use would be minor since similar opportunities are available on other public lands.	Motorized recreation use would continue and is projected to increase from the current 650 visitor days annually to under 1,000 visitor days.
Impact on the Preservation of Archaeological Resources	Overall, the WSA's archaeological resources will be retained under the Proposed Action. Surface-disturbing activities such as mineral development and mechanized fire suppression will be restricted and vehicular access along 8 miles of primitive vehicle routes will be eliminated. Adverse impacts associated with continued mineral development and vehicular access in the non-suitable portion of the WSA will be minor.	Wilderness designation of the Owens Peak WSA will enhance the preservation of archaeological resources. Surface-disturbing activities such as mineral development and mechanized fire suppression will be restricted and vehicle access along 24 miles of primitive vehicle ways will be eliminated.	Overall, the WSA's archaeological resources will be minimally impacted by continued vehicular access and increased recreational OHV use as well as surface disturbance from projected mineral development activities and the use of mechanized equipment for fire suppression throughout the WSA.
Impact on Mineral* Exploration and Development	Wilderness designation would withdraw 64% of the area from mineral entry while 36% would remain available for exploration and development. Due to the low potential for	There would be a minor impact on mineral exploration and development due to withdrawing the entire WSA from mineral appropriation and entry. There are no known	There would be no impacts on mineral exploration and development as the WSA would remain open to mining and mineral exploration and development. Due to the low

Table 5 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative (cont.)

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (PARTIAL-WILDERNESS)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	NO-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
	the occurrence and development of minerals within the WSA, there would be negligible impacts on mineral exploration and development. No significant exploration or development is anticipated within the portion of the WSA not recommended as suitable for wilderness designation.	economic concentrations of mineral resources that would be foregone.	potential for occurrence and development of minerals within the WSA, there is no significant mining activity projected for the area.

* NOTE: Since this impact summary table was prepared, new minerals data has been obtained, refer to the energy and mineral resources section of this document.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

Several study comments received during the wilderness inventory phase dealt with other resource values and potential activities, such as mineral values, rockhounding opportunities, and possible hydroelectric power plant sites. One comment referred to noise and air pollution influences on the unit from Highway 395.

During the study phase a public hearing was held in Fresno, California. During the public hearing and comment period a total of 47 comments were received, both oral and written, relative to this unit. Thirty-eight comments supported the all-wilderness alternative. Five comments supported the Bureau's partial-wilderness recommendation. Four comments supported the no-wilderness alternative.

The Resources Agency of California supported the partial-wilderness alternative, but believed it should be extended to cover the entire WSA, since the gravel pit and Christmas-tree harvesting were not considered justified, especially since the area contains the Monache deer winter range and part of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail.

The Tulare County Board of Supervisors unanimously moved in favor of the Bureau's recommendations.

No comments specific to this WSA were received from Federal agencies.

APPENDIX 1
ESTIMATED COSTS OF ACQUISITION OF NON-FEDERAL HOLDINGS WITHIN
AREAS RECOMMENDED FOR DESIGNATION
OWENS PEAK WSA (CA-010-026)

PARCEL No.	LEGAL DESCRIPTION				TOTAL ACREAGE	NUMBER OF OWNERS	TYPE OF OWNERSHIP BY ESTATE		PRESENTLY PROPOSED FOR ACQUISITION	PREFERRED METHOD OF ACQUISITION	ESTIMATED COST OF ACQUISITION	
	TWNSHP	RNG	SEC	MERIDIAN			SURFACE ESTATE	SUBSURFACE ESTATE			LAND COSTS (\$1000)	PROCESSING COSTS (\$1000)
1	25S.	37E.	32,33	MDM	368	1	PRIVATE	FEDERAL	YES	EXCHANGE	N/A	4.0

These figures were derived from Bureau Land Records and provide for more detail than GIS estimates and therefore may differ from acreage summaries in Table 1.

Sacatar Meadows

CA-010-027

SACATAR MEADOWS WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CA-010-027)

1. THE STUDY AREA --- 17,612 acres

The Sacatar Meadows WSA is located in eastern Tulare County and a small portion of Inyo County. The WSA occupies the western edge of the Sierra Crest, approximately 45 miles northwest of Ridgecrest. The WSA includes 17,460 acres of BLM lands, and 1 private inholding totaling 152 acres (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The WSA is bounded on the south and west by Kennedy Meadows Road and private lands in the Scodie and Big Pine Meadows, on the north by the Sequoia National Forest, and on the east by Little Lake Canyon WSA (CDCA-157), which has been recommended suitable for wilderness.

The WSA consists of the western slopes and the lateral ridges extending west from the Sierra Nevada Crest. The rocky ridges rise sharply from Sacatar and Scodie Meadows to elevations over 8,000 feet. The vegetative cover is primarily pinyon pine with western juniper scattered throughout. Higher elevations of the WSA support small isolated stands of ponderosa pine and red fir. Meadows at lower elevations within the WSA are being invaded by big sagebrush species. The WSA contains an ecotone formed by the convergence of desert and Sierran vegetative communities. The WSA contains one known population, as well as potential habitat, for Phacelia novemmillensis, an annual plant which is identified as a candidate species by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The known population exists above the upper reaches of Nine Mile Canyon at approximately the 6,800-foot elevation. The potential habitat is located in the southern portion of the WSA at the higher elevations on the south-facing slopes.

The WSA lies within the Monache-Walker Pass National Cooperative Land and Wildlife Management Area (NCLWMA) established on January 26, 1962 by Public Land Order No. 2594. The NCLWMA was established to promote cooperative management of wildlife resources between the California Department of Fish and Game (CDF&G) and BLM. The agreement is intended to ensure the mule deer habitat within the area remains in Federal ownership. A portion of a migration corridor used by the Monache deer herd passes through the northern and western appendages of the WSA.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Suitability recommendations were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Benton-Owens Valley/Bodie Coleville Study Areas. A summary of the area's wilderness values was included in the Final EIS. Three different suitability recommendations were analyzed in the EIS: all wilderness, partial wilderness recommending 61% of the area as suitable, and no wilderness.

2. <u>RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE</u> ---	10,721	acres recommended for wilderness
	6,739	BLM acres recommended for nonwilderness

Sixty-one percent partial wilderness is the recommendation for this WSA; 6,739 acres in this WSA are released for uses other than wilderness. This recommendation is in accordance with the South Sierra Foothills Management Framework Plan/South Sierra Foothills Grazing Management EIS dated 1983. The all-wilderness alternative is considered to be the environmentally preferred alternative as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The 61% partial-wilderness alternative will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

Partial wilderness is the recommendation for this WSA based on the following rationale: to provide a wilderness experience through designation of areas with moderate to high wilderness values with few significant competing resource conflicts, to allow livestock grazing and wildlife improvement projects while maintaining wilderness values, to improve consistency of management with the adjacent California Desert District (CDD) suitable wilderness recommendation, to give long-term protection to wildlife habitat and one candidate plant species, and to provide some wilderness opportunities for users seeking more solitude than is currently available in the highly used Sierran Wilderness Areas and those displaced through quota systems. When considered in conjunction with the bordering Little Lake Canyon WSA recommended suitable for wilderness, the wilderness characteristics for the area are outstanding. The deletion of two parcels on the western edge of the WSA from the area recommended for wilderness would reduce manageability problems and resource conflicts.

The primary impacts under this alternative relate to the protection of the wilderness values through wilderness designation and the resulting increases in naturalness and opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation when considered in conjunction with the bordering Little Lake Canyon WSA. None of the existing uses or the projected management actions anticipated for the WSA would result in any irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources. Mineral potential of the area is low. The primary uses occurring within the WSA are livestock grazing and motorized recreational vehicle use.

The majority of the unit is recommended as suitable for wilderness. Boundary adjustments in the western portion of the WSA, south of Sacatar Canyon, provide some enhancement of manageability in the unit by eliminating the private land in section 2, T. 23 S., R. 36 E., MDM., portions of the narrow, isolated WSA lands at the western end of the unit, and three miles of primitive vehicle routes. By adjusting the western boundary to the ridgeline, manageability is enhanced both through easier identification of the boundary and the elimination of outside influences beyond the ridgeline (i.e., Kennedy Meadows Road and other roads and developments around Kennedy Meadows and in the intervening private lands). The remainder of the western boundary follows less identifiable section lines. Since the unit possesses

wilderness character only in association with the adjacent CDD wilderness proposal, the suitable recommendation is contingent upon wilderness designation of the adjacent lands.

The area recommended for wilderness is located in an ecotone formed by the convergence of desert and Sierran vegetative communities. Special features include one known population, as well as potential habitat, for Phacelia novermillensis, an annual plant which is a candidate species. A migration route for the Monache deer herd crosses through the northern and western portions of the WSA. No activities are present or projected within the areas that these special features occupy; they would not be affected by the low level of existing uses or proposed management actions.

Within the 10,721 acres of the WSA recommended for wilderness, closure of ten miles of primitive vehicle routes and elimination of 300 visitor days of motorized recreation use would have a slight positive benefit on naturalness, solitude, and opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. Natural revegetation in this area would occur slowly over time. Construction of two spring developments for wildlife and livestock use would result in negligible local impacts to naturalness. Surface disturbance for each project would be 25 square feet with the perception of naturalness impaired over an area of less than one acre each.

This area lies within the ethnographic territory of the Tubatulabal Indian Tribe. The eastern periphery of the WSA was also utilized by the Panamint Shoshone. No current use of the area by Native Americans is known. The primary prehistoric use is projected to have been pinyon nut collecting. Additionally, a major trade route crosses the WSA from Sacatar Canyon over the crest of the Sierra Nevada to Little Lake Canyon east of the WSA. Cultural sensitivity for the unit ranges from moderate to high.

Some imprints of man's activity are apparent but are not dominant. Vehicle ways lead into the WSA from the south and west. Sacatar Trail (T. 22 S., R. 37 E., MDM) completely crosses the WSA, continuing into the Little Lake Canyon WSA. Most trails are faint; they are mostly used for hunter access. Approximately 14 miles of vehicle ways are within the WSA area. Most serious impairments to the solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation values of the WSA are the private land fingers extending into the unit. Also, due to the unit's long, narrow character, outstanding opportunities exist only when considered with the adjoining Little Lake Canyon WSA.

The non-suitable portion of the WSA (6,891 acres west of Deer Spring) will continue to be managed for uses other than wilderness.

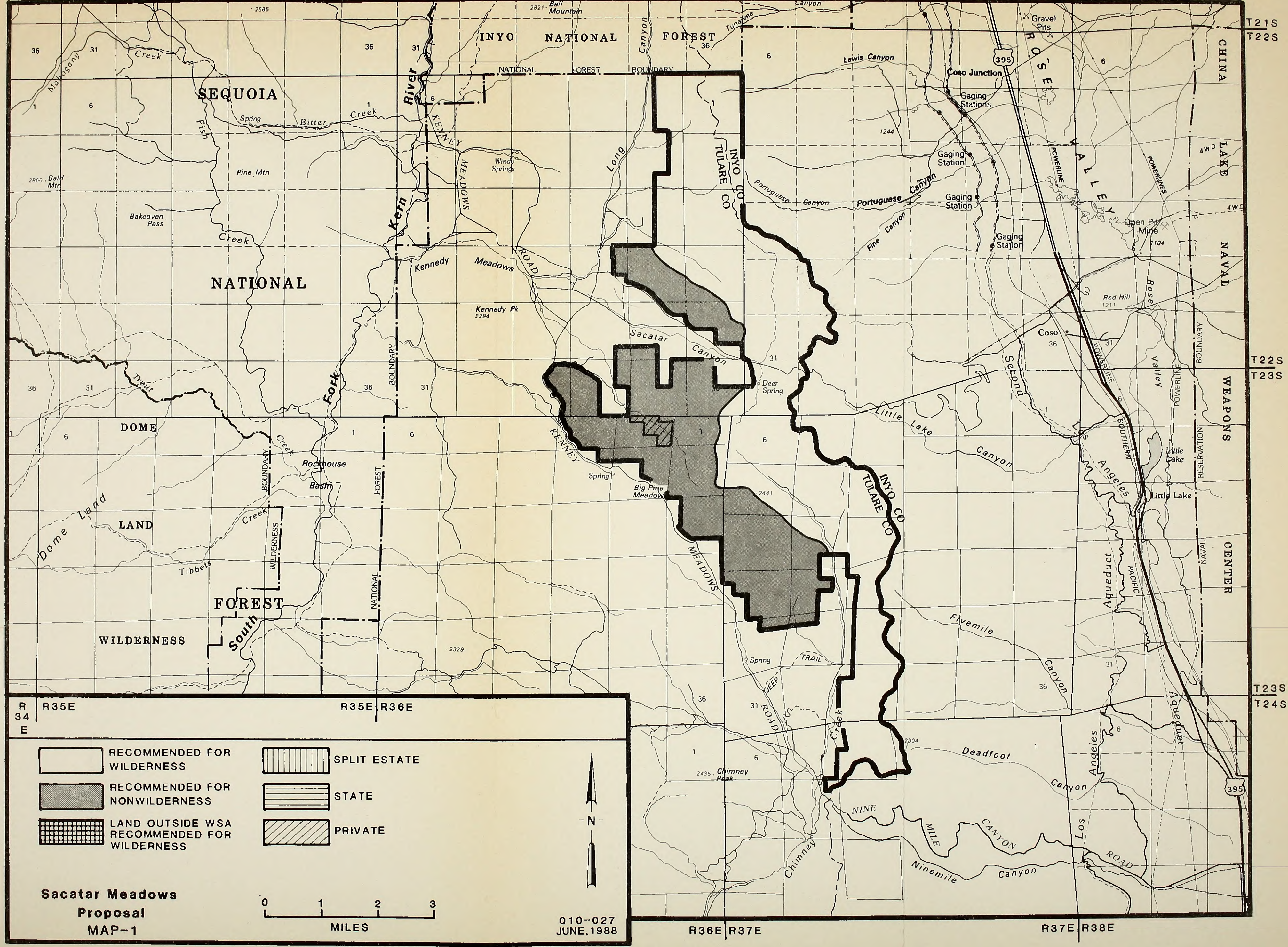


TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	17,460
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		152
Total		<u>17,612</u>
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Study Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	10,721
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<u>10,721</u>
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	6,739
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>6,739</u>

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The Sacatar Meadows WSA generally appears to have been affected by the forces of nature with human influences only apparent in the valley floors and along the boundaries of private lands. These include 14 miles of unobtrusive primitive vehicle routes and two spring developments for livestock use. Outside the WSA to the northwest, a residential subdivision extends like fingers adjacent to the WSA, greatly affecting the naturalness of the area.

The vegetative cover is primarily pinyon pine with western juniper scattered throughout. Higher elevations of the WSA support small isolated stands of ponderosa pine and red fir. Meadows within the unit are being invaded by big sagebrush species. The WSA contains an ecotone formed by the convergence of desert and Sierran vegetative communities.

Several springs have been identified in this area, including Deer Spring which supports four acres of riparian meadow vegetation. The springs provide access to water that can be treated for drinking and are cool and moist environments for recreation. Intermittent streams in the area provide important riparian habitat for wildlife, and are aesthetically attractive environments.

2. Solitude: The irregular configuration, narrow shape, and the penetrating nature of the private land pattern greatly limit opportunities for solitude. The expanding residential development and private land demands in the Kennedy Meadows area along the northwest boundary are apparent from the WSA's ridgelines and influence the opportunities for solitude. However, when considered with the adjoining Little Lake Canyon WSA recommended suitable for wilderness, the additional size and physiographic diversity enhance the limited opportunities to outstanding levels.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and unconfined recreation: As with solitude, the irregular configuration and narrow shape hamper opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation within the WSA. When considered in conjunction with the Little Lake Canyon WSA, the many deep canyons contribute to primitive and unconfined opportunities.

The Sacatar Meadows WSA, in conjunction with the adjoining Little Lake Canyon WSA, offers outstanding opportunities for hiking, hunting, rockhounding, and primitive camping.

4. Special features: The WSA contains one known population as well as potential habitat for Phacelia novermillensis, an annual plant which is a candidate species listed by the USFWS. A migration route for the Monache deer herd also crosses through the northern and western portions of the WSA.

B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS)

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 17,460 acres of the Sierran Forest/Juniper-Pinyon Woodland ecosystem. Wilderness designation of this WSA would add a new ecosystem to the NWPS. The Sierran Forest province - Juniper-Pinyon Woodland community is not currently represented in the NWPS.

TABLE 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
Sierran Forest/ Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	0	0	5	37,540
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
Sierran Forest/ Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	0	0	5	37,540

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of ten major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3 - Wilderness Opportunities for Residents of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	<u>NWPS areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
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Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,515
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Riverside-San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
Santa Barbara-Santa Maria- Lompoc	20	1,166,142	35	528,590
Visalia-Tulare-Porterville	34	4,431,635	61	1,681,921

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA is within 50 air miles of five BLM WSAs recommended for wilderness designation: Rockhouse (CA-010-029), Little Lake Canyon (CDCA-157), Owens Peak (CDCA-158), El Paso Mountains (CDCA-164), and Golden Valley (CDCA-170). Four miles to the west

of the WSA is the Domeland Wilderness Area and five miles to the northwest lies the South Sierra Wilderness Area. Both of these units are managed by the Sequoia National Forest.

C. Manageability

The area recommended is manageable as wilderness. No major conflicting uses occur within this area. There have been no conflicts over water rights for the area's streams and springs, and none are anticipated in the future. The springs are protected as Public Water Reserve 107's and have been notified to the State of California, Division of Water Rights. The streams form the headwaters of their watersheds and have not been diverted within the WSA. With the boundary adjustments recommended, resource conflicts would be reduced to a minimum, thus allowing for the effective management of this area as wilderness. Management is additionally enhanced by the adjacent suitable recommendation for Little Lake Canyon WSA to the east.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of information known at the time of the preliminary suitability recommendation: The Sacatar Meadows WSA is in the BLM Sacatar Meadows Geology-Energy-Mineral (G-E-M) Resource Area. This report was prepared for BLM by Great Basin G-E-M Joint Venture in 1983. The mineral resources in the Affected Environment section of the Wilderness Recommendations Benton-Owens Valley, Bodie-Coleville Study Areas, Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in 1987 was taken primarily from the G-E-M report. Additional minerals information used in the EIS was obtained from the U.S. Bureau of Mines (BOM) Mineral Lands Assessment Open File Report, MLA-53-85. This report was published in 1985 and is titled "Mineral Resources of the Sacatar Meadows South Wilderness Study Area, Tulare and Inyo Counties, California". The EIS indicates the majority of the WSA has a low potential for mineral occurrence. In the southerly portion of the WSA, a moderate potential for uranium was mentioned. In addition, the EIS states the potential for common varieties of salable minerals is low and that there is no potential for oil, gas or geothermal resources.

The WSA is primarily composed of granitic rocks of the Cretaceous Age Isabella Grandiorite Formation. The intrusion of this formation into the Kernville Series (phyllites, quartzite, marble, slate and metavolcanics) believed to be Permo Carboniferous in age, resulted in a number of zones of contact metamorphism. These zones occurred where isolated roof pendants were intruded by calcareous igneous rock bodies and are indicative of tungsten occurrence. Although this geologic environment is recognized, the G-E-M report states the potential for tungsten is low within the

WSA. The EIS states that there is a moderate potential for uranium and that there are two types of occurrence. The first is in isolated pegmatites intruded into the Isabella Formation where it is found in association with magnetite, ilmenite and molybdenite. Uranium occurrences were also identified in stream sediment sample information (Oak Ridge Gaseous Diffusion Plant, 1981, "Hydrogeochemical and stream sediment reconnaissance basic data for Bakersfield Quadrangle" U.S. Department Energy Report GJBX-419(81)). When the information was field-checked by BOM in 1985, altered shear zones were shown to be the probable source of the uranium.

Although there are two known uranium deposits in the immediate vicinity, only one is believed to be within the boundaries of the WSA. The location of the other deposit is uncertain. Although no production date is available, records show that limited production has occurred. BLM records in 1984 showed that no mining claims, mineral leases or mineral material sales contracts/permits existed.

2. Summary of significant new mineral resource data collected since the suitability recommendation, which should be considered in the final recommendation: New information obtained from a joint USGS/BOM publication titled "Mineral Resources of the Sacatar Meadows Wilderness Study Areas, Tulare and Inyo Counties, California, 1988" (USGS Bulletin 1705-D) supports the EIS conclusions that there is a low potential for metallic mineral resources. This information has resulted in a reassessment of the potential for uranium. The uranium potential has been reclassified as low according to the BLM classification scheme. This is based on evidence supporting the rationale that any uranium resources that exist in the WSA are isolated and suggest insufficient continuity of resources to justify moderate potential classification.

The lack of mineral interest is indicated by the fact that no mines, mining claims or mineral leases were recorded on BLM's mining claim record index dated March 25, 1988. Since all mineral values for this WSA are considered to be low, no mineral potential map was prepared for this WSA.

E. Impacts on Resources

The following table summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for all alternatives considered including designation or non-designation of the entire area as wilderness. (For a full explanation of this summary, refer to the Benton-Owens Valley/Bodie-Coleville Study Areas - Wilderness Final Environmental Impact Statement.)

TABLE 4 - Comparison of Impacts of the Proposed Action and the Alternatives

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (PARTIAL-WILDERNESS)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE
Wilderness Values	<p>There would be a slight benefit to wilderness values within the 10,721 acres of the WSA designated wilderness. Elimination of 300 visitor-days of motorized recreation use and prohibiting a 300-acre prescribed burn would help retain and maintain the perception of naturalness and the sense of solitude.</p> <p>On the 6,891 acres not designated wilderness, solitude and naturalness would be impaired as a result of continued motorized vehicle use and a 700-acre prescribed burn. Overall, there would be only a slight impact to wilderness values throughout the WSA.</p>	<p>Wilderness designation of the entire 17,612 acres within the Sacatar Meadows WSA would result in slight positive benefits to the wilderness values. Naturalness and solitude would be retained locally as a result of two prescribed burns totaling 1,000 acres. Closure of the WSA to motorized recreation use would result in a slight positive benefit to wilderness values, primarily solitude. Special features including sensitive plant habitat and deer migration corridors would be retained and slightly enhanced.</p>	<p>The overall impacts on wilderness values would be minor throughout the 17,612-acre WSA. Locally, the perception of naturalness and sense of solitude would be diminished within an area of approximately 2,200 acres as a result of prescribed burning. Continued low levels of existing uses and the lack of proposed activities would not significantly affect wilderness.</p>
Motorized Recreation Use	<p>Overall, there would be only a minor impact to motorized recreation use as a result of designating a 10,721-acre portion of the WSA as wilderness with 300 visitor-days foregone. Opportunities outside the WSA and within the 6,891 acres of the WSA not designated wilderness would accommodate displaced users. Use within the non-wilderness portion would continue and is projected to increase by 200 visitor-days.</p>	<p>Wilderness designation would close the entire 17,612 acres within the WSA to motorized recreation use eliminating 500 visitor-days per year. This would result in a minor adverse impact as use would be displaced to other public lands outside the WSA.</p>	<p>There would be no impacts on motorized recreation use which is projected to remain stable at 500 visitor-days per year.</p>

TABLE 4 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative (cont.)

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (PARTIAL-WILDERNESS)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	No-wilderness/NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE
Livestock Grazing and Range Improvements	There would be only a minor impact to livestock grazing as a result of prohibiting a 300-acre prescribed burn in the wilderness portion of the WSA foregoing an increase of 50 AUMs. Overall livestock use would increase in the non-designated portion by 117 AUMs as a result of a 700-acre burn. No other proposed projects would be eliminated.	There would be a minor impact to livestock grazing. Precluding 1,000 acres of prescribed burns would forego the opportunity to increase forage production by 167 AUMs. Current livestock use would continue to be allotted at 462 AUMs.	There would be no impacts on livestock grazing and range improvements. All planned projects would be implemented, including two prescribed burns on a total of 1,000 acres resulting in an increase of 167 AUMs.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

Several comments were received during the wilderness inventory phase. These comments addressed potential mineral and utility site values in the unit. Two comments also addressed the existence of roads and hydroelectric generation plant sites within the WSA. A concern was further expressed regarding the unit's proximity to the outside influences of Highway 395.

During the study phase, a public meeting was held in Markleeville, California on October 26, 1983; no members of the public attended the session. A public hearing was held the following day, October 27, 1983, in Bishop, California, in a split afternoon/evening session. Thirty-one individuals attended, and fourteen testified.

One comment noted that the portion recommended suitable for wilderness does not contain a road and, thus, questioned how people would get into the area. The individual mentioned that the Deer Springs Road in the suitable area is not considered a road because of its deteriorating and poor condition; at the ridgeline it becomes unusable. Access to and around the area is available via the Nine Mile Canyon Road, however. One other individual stated that since grazing is established in the recommended suitable area, it would be allowed to continue in the future.

The Inyo County Board of Supervisors expressed opposition to the BLM wilderness recommendation due to its inconsistency with the adopted conservation and open space elements of the Inyo County General Plan. Only the no-wilderness alternative would be compatible with current Inyo County management plans. The Board also felt they were not adequately consulted in the BLM wilderness planning process for WSAs in Inyo County.

No Federal or State agency comments were received specific to this WSA.

Rockhouse

CA-010-029

ROCKHOUSE WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CA-010-029)

1. THE STUDY AREA --- 130 acres

The Rockhouse WSA is located south of Kennedy Meadows in eastern Tulare County, approximately 80 miles northeast of Bakersfield. It consists of a 130-acre parcel of BLM land (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The WSA is bounded to the north and south by private land, to the east by a maintained access road, and to the west by the United States Forest Service (USFS) Domeland Wilderness.

Pinyon pine, western juniper and an understory of big sage, Douglas rabbit-brush, and needlegrass are the predominant vegetation in the WSA. No special features are found within this WSA. This parcel is within a portion of the Monache-Walker Pass National Cooperative Land and Wildlife Management Area.

The WSA was studied under Section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Suitability recommendations were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the California Section 202 Wilderness Study Areas. A summary of the area's wilderness values was included in the final EIS. Two different suitability recommendations were analyzed in the EIS: all wilderness and no wilderness.

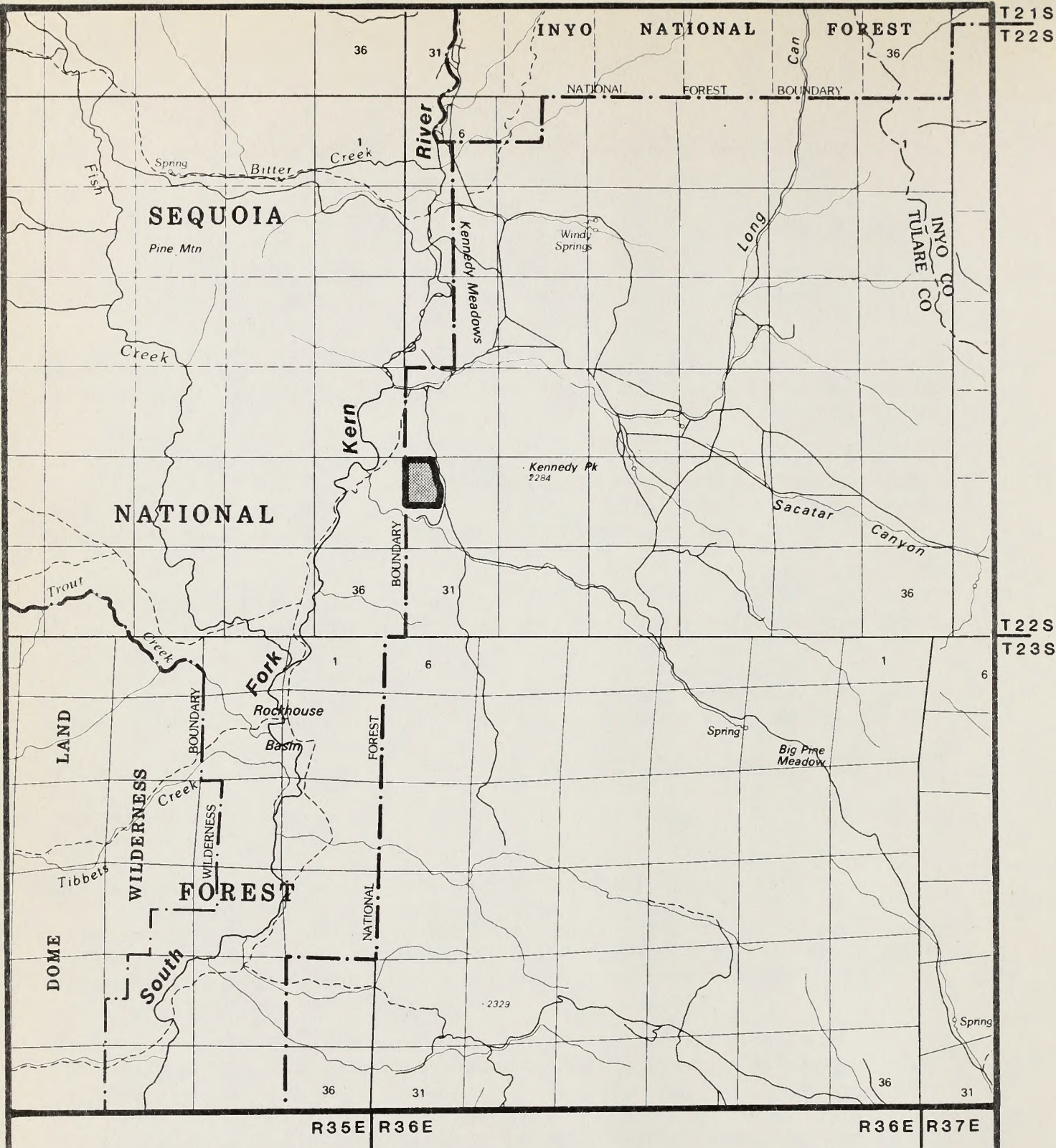
2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE ---



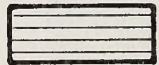

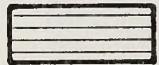


0	acres recommended for wilderness
130	BLM acres recommended for non-wilderness

No-wilderness is the recommendation for this WSA. The entire acreage in the WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. The all-wilderness alternative is considered to be the environmentally preferred alternative as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The no-wilderness alternative will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The WSA is recommended non-suitable for the following reasons: the wilderness values are low and current management has proven effective in maintaining the area's existing resources. The Sequoia National Forest (USFS) has indicated the Rockhouse WSA does not possess values that will enhance the USFS Domeland Wilderness Area. The addition of this WSA to the USFS designated wilderness area will create a potentially unmanageable boundary with the WSA protruding like a finger, with no specific topographic delineation. Signing of the area's boundary and frequent patrols would be necessary to manage the area as wilderness.

There are no known vehicle routes of travel contained within the existing WSA boundary.



- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|----------------------------|---|--------------|
|  | NONE |  | RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |  | SPLIT ESTATE |
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS |  | STATE |  | PRIVATE |
|  | LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS | | | | |

**Rockhouse
Proposal
MAP-1**

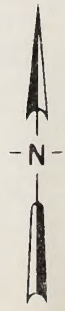
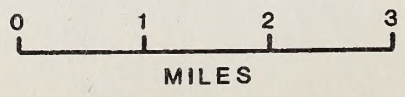


TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	130
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
Total		130
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Study Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	130
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		130

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The small 130-acre parcel that makes up this WSA generally retains its natural character and influence, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable. No roads exist within the unit, although the entire eastern boundary of the WSA is a major dirt road connecting residences to the south with Kennedy Meadows. No structures or fences are known to exist in this unit, although a livestock fence is located along the western boundary of the WSA.
2. Solitude: This unit is too small to provide adequate opportunity for solitude considering that a major road makes up the eastern boundary and private land borders the unit on the north and south. This WSA may be overflowed in the future by military aircraft as

part of the national defense mission during approved military operations. The visual intrusions and associated noise create temporary effects on solitude which are deemed acceptable and necessary as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and unconfined recreation: This unit is very small and opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation are extremely limited. Very little non-motorized use, if any, is known to currently exist.
4. Special features: The WSA contains no ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS)

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 130 acres of the Sierran Forest/Juniper-Pinyon Woodland ecosystem. Although the WSA would add diversity in the types of ecosystems represented in the NWPS the Bureau has recommended two WSA's with similar ecosystems (Owen's Peak WSA and Sacatar Meadows WSA) as suitable for wilderness designation.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
Sierran Forest/ Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	0	0	5	54,870
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
Sierran Forest/ Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	0	0	5	54,870

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of ten major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3 - Wilderness Opportunities for Residents of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	NWPS areas		Other BIM Studies	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>California</u>				
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,515
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Fresno	35	4,048,852	28	460,790
Los Angeles-Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
Merced	33	3,957,550	25	348,753
Modesto	36	4,126,963	81	1,722,326
Oxnard-Ventura	23	2,195,198	85	2,703,260
Riverside-San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
Santa Barbara-Santa Maria- Lompoc	20	1,166,142	35	528,590
Visalia-Tulare-Porterville	34	4,431,635	61	1,681,921

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The following is a list of seven BIM WSAs within 50 air miles recommended for wilderness designation or partial designation: Rockhouse (603 area) (CA-010-029), Sacatar Meadows (CA-010-027), Owens Peak (CA-010-026), Little Lake Canyon (CDCA-157), Owens Peak (CDCA-158), El Paso Mountains (CDCA-164), and Golden Valley (CDCA-170). The Domeland Wilderness is immediately adjacent to the west; the South Sierra and Golden Trout Wilderness Areas are four miles and 15 miles, respectively, to the north. All areas are managed by the Sequoia National Forest.

C. Manageability

The Rockhouse WSA is manageable as wilderness, but only with extreme difficulty. Manageability problems include the area's small size, the existence of a major dirt road along the east boundary, and the fact that the addition of this parcel would increase the irregularity of the already existing Domeland Wilderness Area boundary. Frequent signing and patrol of the borders would be required to insure the integrity of the unit.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of information known at the time of the preliminary suitability recommendations: The geology and mineral resources of the Rockhouse Basin (202) WSA is described in a special State report by the California Division of Mines and Geology (CDMG)

(i.e., Taylor and others, 1984, Mineral Resource Potential of the Rockhouse Basin Wilderness Study Area, Kern and Tulare Counties, California; CDMG, Special Report 157, 87 pp). The mineral resource data in the Affected Environment Section of the 1987 BLM Wilderness Recommendations, California Section 202 Wilderness Study Areas Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was taken largely from this State report. The EIS indicates that the WSA is considered to have a low potential for the occurrence of mineral resources. The WSA encompasses a portion of the Sierra Nevada batholith and is composed primarily of granitic rocks (granodiorite and quartz diorite). A roof pendant of quartzite (normally associated with mineralization in the area) crops out in the northwest corner of the WSA. The EIS indicated that historical development has occurred outside the WSA for tungsten and barite. No unpatented mining claims, mineral leases, or mineral material sales contracts/permits were on record with BLM as of April 4, 1987.

The low mineral resource occurrence potential described in the BLM 1988 EIS is supported by the CDMG 1984 Special Report. The CDMG conducted an extensive mineral survey of the area in late 1983, including a literature search, geological field mapping, rock and stream sediment sampling, and geochemical and geophysical studies. This mineral survey was conducted under contract for the BLM. The CDMG report showed no old mines or prospects in the WSA, and the area was considered to have no potential for oil and gas and low to no potential for geothermal resources.

2. Summary of significant new mineral resource data collected since the suitability recommendation, which should be considered in the final recommendation: No U.S. Geologic Survey (USGS) or U.S. Bureau of Mines (BOM) mineral surveys were conducted in this WSA. BLM records indicate that there are no mining claims in this WSA as of March 25, 1988. Because of the WSA's low mineral resource potential, no mineral resource potential map was prepared for this document.

E. Impacts on Resources

The following table summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for all alternatives considered including designation or non-designation of the entire area as wilderness. (For a full explanation of this summary, refer to the California Section 202 Study Areas - Wilderness Final Environmental Impact Statement.)

Table 4 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impacts on Wilderness Values	Non-designation of the WSA as wilderness will not result in any anticipated impacts to the wilderness values. There are no surface disturbances in the WSA. Recreational vehicle use and mineral/energy exploration and development are not projected within the WSA. Continued limited livestock grazing will not impact the area's wilderness values and inspection and maintenance will only negligibly impact solitude. Potential fire suppression activities as a result of wildfires could lead to short-term impacts to the perception of naturalness.	Wilderness designation of the Rockhouse WSA would result in a slight positive benefit. Long-term protection from unanticipated future actions that could result in potential adverse impacts would be provided by legislation.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

During the wilderness inventory phase comments were received pertaining to the larger Rockhouse Sec. 603 unit to the south. No comments specific to the Rockhouse 202 area were received.

During the study phase a public hearing was held in Bakersfield, California, and written comments were accepted until February 15, 1988. The majority of the comments received supported the all-wilderness alternative for this unit.

No Federal, State or County agency comments were received specific to the WSA.

Domeland

CA-010-032

DOMELAND WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CA-010-032)

1. THE STUDY AREA ---

2,223 acres

The Domeland WSA is located in the northeastern portion of Kern County approximately six miles south of the Kern/Tulare County line. It is situated at the southern end of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, just across the south fork of the Kern River from the community of Onyx, California. The WSA includes 2,223 acres of BLM land (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The WSA consists of two separate parcels, each bounded on the north by the United States Forest Service (USFS) Domeland Wilderness Area; and bounded on the remaining three sides by private land.

The WSA is just to the east of Lake Isabella. Both parcels are made up of primarily very steep, rocky hillsides and the ends of ridges extending out from the USFS's Domeland Wilderness Area. Elevations vary from approximately 2,800 feet on the south to over 4,000 feet on the northern portions of the WSA. Vegetation on south-facing slopes is primarily desert needlegrass, with some burrobush, chaparral yucca, convolvulus and California buckwheat. The easternmost parcel contains a small riparian zone along the South Fork of the Kern River. This zone is dominated by Fremont cottonwood and willow trees.

Ninety-percent of this WSA lies within the Monache-Walker Pass National Cooperative Land and Wildlife Management Area (NCLWMA) established January 26, 1962 by Public Land Order No. 2594. The NCLWMA is cooperatively managed by the BLM with the California Department of Fish and Game (CDF&G) under current public land laws. The entire WSA is within the South Fork Cooperative Management Agreement Area. The riparian area in the WSA is managed with The Nature Conservancy under a cooperative agreement. Proposed actions will include willow and cottonwood planting and protective fencing for plants in the riparian zone along the South Fork of the Kern River on the southern boundary of the WSA.

The WSA was studied under Section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Suitability recommendations were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the California Section 202 Wilderness Study Areas. A summary of the area's wilderness values was included in the Final EIS. Two different suitability recommendations were analyzed in the EIS: all wilderness and no wilderness.

2.

RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE ---

0 acres recommended
for wilderness
2,223 BLM acres recommended
for non-wilderness

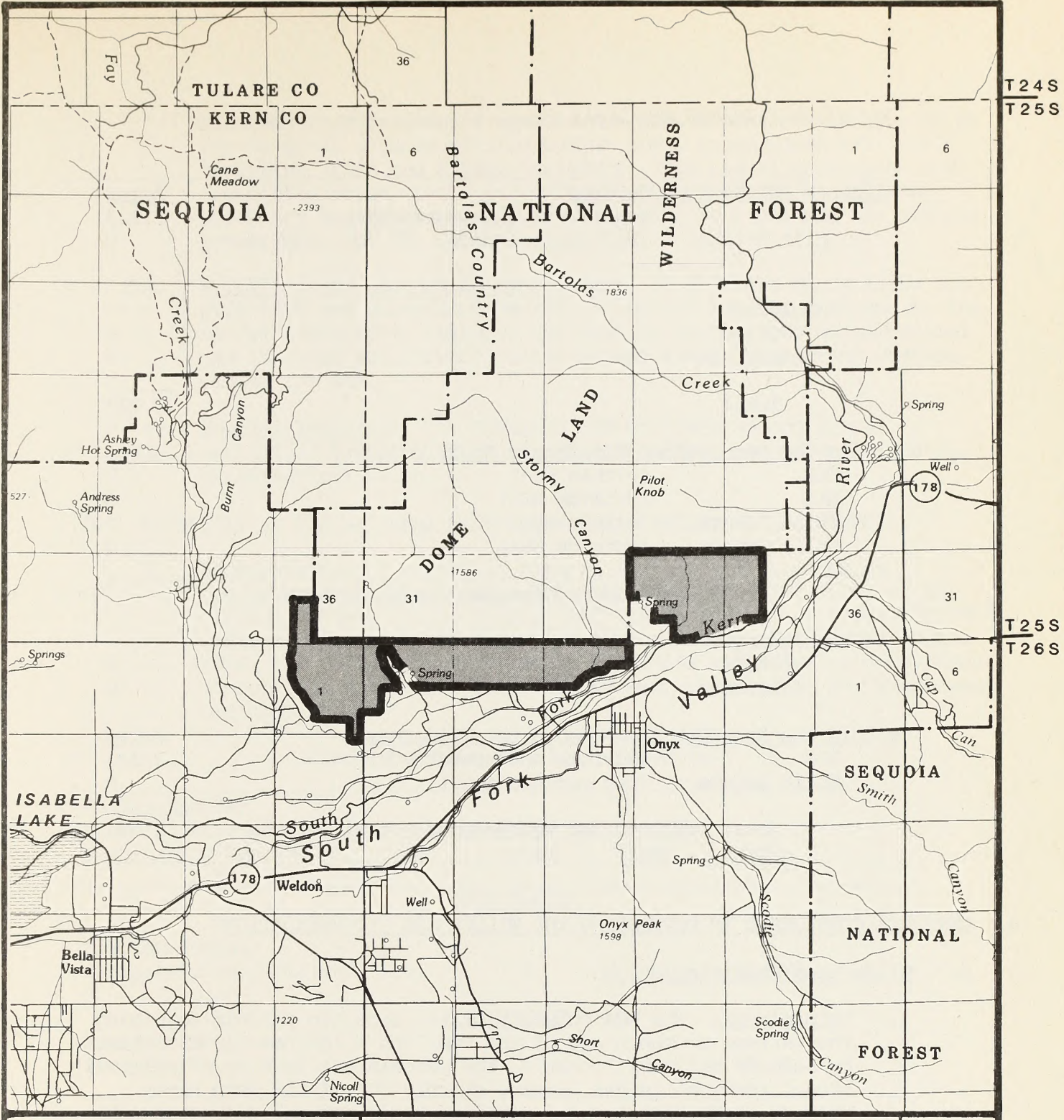
No wilderness is the recommendation for this WSA. The entire acreage in the WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. The all-wilderness alternative is considered to be the environmentally preferred alternative as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The no-wilderness alternative will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.




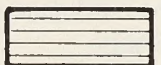

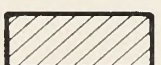
The WSA is recommended nonsuitable for the following reasons: The wilderness values of the area are not outstanding; current management has proven effective in maintaining the area's existing resources; the Sequoia National Forest expressed concern about the potential for increasing trespass vulnerability to the USFS Domeland Wilderness Area should the WSA be designated wilderness, and the steep, rocky slopes do not add to or enhance the wilderness character of the Domeland Wilderness Area.

The wilderness values for this WSA generally depend on the adjacent USFS Domeland Wilderness Area, due to the WSA's small size and narrow shape. The WSA has generally retained its naturalness, however, opportunities for solitude are limited. Primitive and unconfined recreation is restricted due to steep slopes and the lack of access, except in the western end of the WSA where occasional hunting occurs.

The scenic quality of the WSA is typical of the surrounding landscape with little diversity other than the presence of the South Fork Kern River. Man-made visual intrusions are limited to ranching roads and fences along the southern boundary. Overall, the WSA is not considered to have high scenic quality.

Being part of the Monache-Walker Pass NCLWMA, the area is managed in cooperation with the CDF&G for the benefit of wildlife resources. Additionally, the riparian portion of the WSA is cooperatively managed with The Nature Conservancy.



- | | | | | |
|---|---|----------------------------|---|--------------|
|  | NONE | RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |  | SPLIT ESTATE |
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS | |  | STATE |
|  | LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS | |  | PRIVATE |

**Domeland
Proposal
MAP-1**

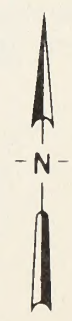


TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	2,223
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
Total		<hr/> 2,223
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Study Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<hr/> 0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	2,223
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<hr/> 2,223

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The WSA consists of two separate parcels adjoining the extreme southern end of the Domeland Wilderness (administered by Sequoia National Forest). The parcels are made up of primarily steep, rocky hillsides, rising sharply out of the Kern River Valley. Both parcels have retained their natural character with only minor manmade intrusions along the westernmost parcel's southern boundary. These intrusions include ranching roads from the Onyx Ranch and a man-made reservoir in Gibonney Canyon.
2. Solitude: Opportunities for solitude in this WSA are limited due to the unit's relatively small size, narrow shape and proximity to ranching and farming operations.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and unconfined recreation: Very little opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation exists in this unit due to its severe topographic features and lack of access. No non-motorized use is known to currently exist except along the extreme western end of the WSA.
4. Special features: The Domeland WSA contains no ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS)

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 2,223 acres of the Sierran Forest/Juniper-Pinyon Woodland ecosystem. Although the WSA would add diversity to the types of ecosystems represented in the NWPS, the Bureau has recommended two WSA's with similar ecosystems (Owens Peak WSA and Sacatar Meadows WSA) as suitable for wilderness designation.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
Sierran Forest/ Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	0	0	5	52,777
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
Sierran Forest/ Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	0	0	5	52,777

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of ten major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3 - Wilderness Opportunities for Residents of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	<u>NWPS areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>California</u>				
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,515
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Fresno	35	4,048,852	28	460,790
Los Angeles-Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
Merced	33	3,957,550	25	348,753
Modesto	36	4,126,963	81	1,722,326
Oxnard-Ventura	23	2,195,198	85	2,703,260
Riverside-San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
Santa Barbara-Santa Maria- Lompoc	20	1,166,142	35	528,590
Visalia-Tulare-Porterville	34	4,431,635	61	1,681,921

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The following is a list of BLM WSAs within 50 air miles recommended for wilderness designation or partial designation: Sacatar Meadows (CA-010-027), Rockhouse (Sec. 603 portion) (CA-010-029), Little Lake Canyon (CDCA-157), Owens Peak (CDCA-158), El Paso Mountain (CDCA-164), and Golden Valley (CDCA-170). The Domeland Wilderness Area is immediately to the north and the Golden Trout Wilderness Area is 25 miles to the north. Both wilderness areas are managed by Sequoia National Forest.

C. Manageability

The Domeland WSA is manageable as wilderness, but with some difficulty. Manageability problems include the irregular boundary leading to difficult recognition on the ground. In addition, access to the area by OHVs from adjacent private lands would present problems.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of information known at the time of the preliminary suitability recommendations: The geology and mineral resources of the Domeland (202) WSA are described in a map and report published by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the U.S. Bureau of Mines (BOM) for the adjacent USFS Domeland Wilderness Area, (i.e., Berquist and others, 1983, Mineral Resource Potential Map of the Tulare Counties, California, USGS, Misc. Field Studies Map, MF-1395F). The mineral resource data in the Affected Environment section of the 1988 BLM Wilderness Recommendations, California

Section 202 Wilderness Study Areas Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was taken largely from this USGS map and report. The EIS indicates that the whole WSA has a low mineral resource occurrence potential for a porphyry-type molybdenum deposit (including copper, lead and zinc), and a low development potential for common varieties of salable materials such as sand, stone, gravel, etc. The potential for the occurrence of oil and gas and geothermal resources is considered to be low.

The WSA is composed primarily of granitic rocks (granite, granodiorite, and quartz monzonite) of the Cretaceous age Isabella Granodiorite formation. This formation is part of the southern Sierra Nevada batholith. The south fork of the Kern River cuts through the WSA on its southern boundary. Two north-south trending canyons merge with the river, providing deposits of alluvium and alluvial fan material within the WSA. Metallic mineralization is considered to be of the hydrothermal type. Evidence for the metallic mineralization is based solely on geochemical data from stream sediments and spring waters. The low-potential rating for metallic mineralization is based on the small size of the geochemical anomalies and the lack of corroborating geological evidence. The low-potential rating for common varieties of sand, stone, gravel, etc. is based on the availability of other, more accessible sources in the riverbed.

2. Summary of significant new mineral resource data collected since the suitability recommendations, which should be considered in the final recommendation: No USGS or BOM mineral surveys were conducted in this WSA.

There is no record of production of minerals from this WSA. BLM records dated March 25, 1988 indicate that there are no unpatented mining claims, mineral leases or mineral material sales contracts or permits in the WSA. Because of the low-potential rating for mineral resources, no mineral potential map was prepared for this WSA.

E. Impacts on Resources

The following table summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for all alternatives considered including designation or non-designation of the entire area as wilderness. (For a full explanation of this summary, refer to the California Section 202 Wilderness Study Areas - Wilderness Final Environmental Impact Statement.)

Table 4 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impacts on Wilderness Values	Impacts to wilderness values, particularly naturalness and solitude, will be limited. The only activity affecting wilderness values will be the minimal mineral assessment work necessary to maintain four placer claims. There will be up to one-half acre of seasonal surface disturbance within the riverbed and the perception of naturalness temporarily impaired on up to five acres. Solitude will be intermittently disrupted as a result of the actual assessment activity. There will be no other impacts to the wilderness values within the WSA.	Wilderness designation of the Domeland WSA would result in a slight positive benefit. The four placer claims would most likely be terminated. As a result, validity examinations and annual mineral assessment work would be eliminated. Long-term protection from anticipated future actions that could result in potential adverse impacts would be provided by wilderness designation.
Impacts on Mineral/Energy Exploration and Development	There will be no impact on mineral/energy exploration and development.	Wilderness designation would result in closing the entire area to mineral entry. Based on a low to nonexistent potential for mineral development and the lack of activity on four placer claims, there would be no mineral development opportunities foregone.

Table 4 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative (Cont'd)

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impacts on Archaeological Resources	Although activities such as mineral/energy exploration and development will be permitted, there is no surface disturbance anticipated due to the lack of projected management actions. There will be no impact on archaeological resources.	There would be a slight positive impact on potential archaeological resources in the WSA. Although wilderness designation would preclude surface-disturbing activities such as mineral exploration and development, there are no proposed management actions that would potentially result in any impacts to archaeological resources that may exist in the WSA.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

Several comments were received during the wilderness inventory phase. The majority of comments supported wilderness study of the area. A few comments addressed the potential mineral values within the unit.

During the study phase, a public hearing was held in Bakersfield, California and written comments were accepted until February 15, 1988. The majority of the comments received supported the all-wilderness alternative for this unit.

The Kern County Department of Planning and Development Services supported wilderness designation for this unit. No comments were received from Federal or State agencies specific to this WSA.

Caliente Mountain

CA-010-042

CALIENTE MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CA-010-042)

1. THE STUDY AREA --- 18,083 acres

The Caliente Mountain WSA is located in the extreme southeast portion of San Luis Obispo County. It is located at the southern end of the San Joaquin Valley, approximately 45 miles southwest of Bakersfield. The WSA includes 17,590 acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land, 452 acres of State land and 41 acres of private inholdings for a total of 18,083 acres (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The WSA is bounded to the north and west by private land, to the south by private land and a ranch road, to the east by Horse Canyon Road, and the east fork of the Sulphur Canyon drainage, and an unnamed drainage directly opposite the ridge from the east fork Sulphur Canyon drainage.

The WSA includes Caliente Mountain and is bordered by the Carrizo Plains on the north and Cuyama Valley on the south. The topography of the WSA is rugged, consisting of steep canyons and high, sharp mountains and ridges. The elevation of the WSA varies from 5,104 feet above sea level at Caliente Mountain to 2,100 feet at the mouth of Post Canyon. Vegetation varies from dense chaparral and juniper along ridgelines to scattered shrubs and annual grasses in canyon floors. The WSA lies entirely within the 58,867-acre Caliente National Cooperative Land and Wildlife Management Area (NCLWMA) established on April 6, 1961 by Public Land Order No. 2326. The NCLWMA is cooperatively managed by BLM with the California Department of Fish and Game (CDF&G).

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Suitability recommendations were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) for the Central California Study Areas. A summary of the area's wilderness values was included in the Final EIS. Two different suitability recommendations were analyzed in the EIS: all wilderness and no wilderness.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE --- 0 acres recommended
for wilderness
17,590 BLM acres recommended for non-
wilderness

No wilderness is the recommendation for this WSA. The entire acreage in the WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. The all wilderness alternative is considered to be the environmentally preferred alternative as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The no wilderness alternative will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

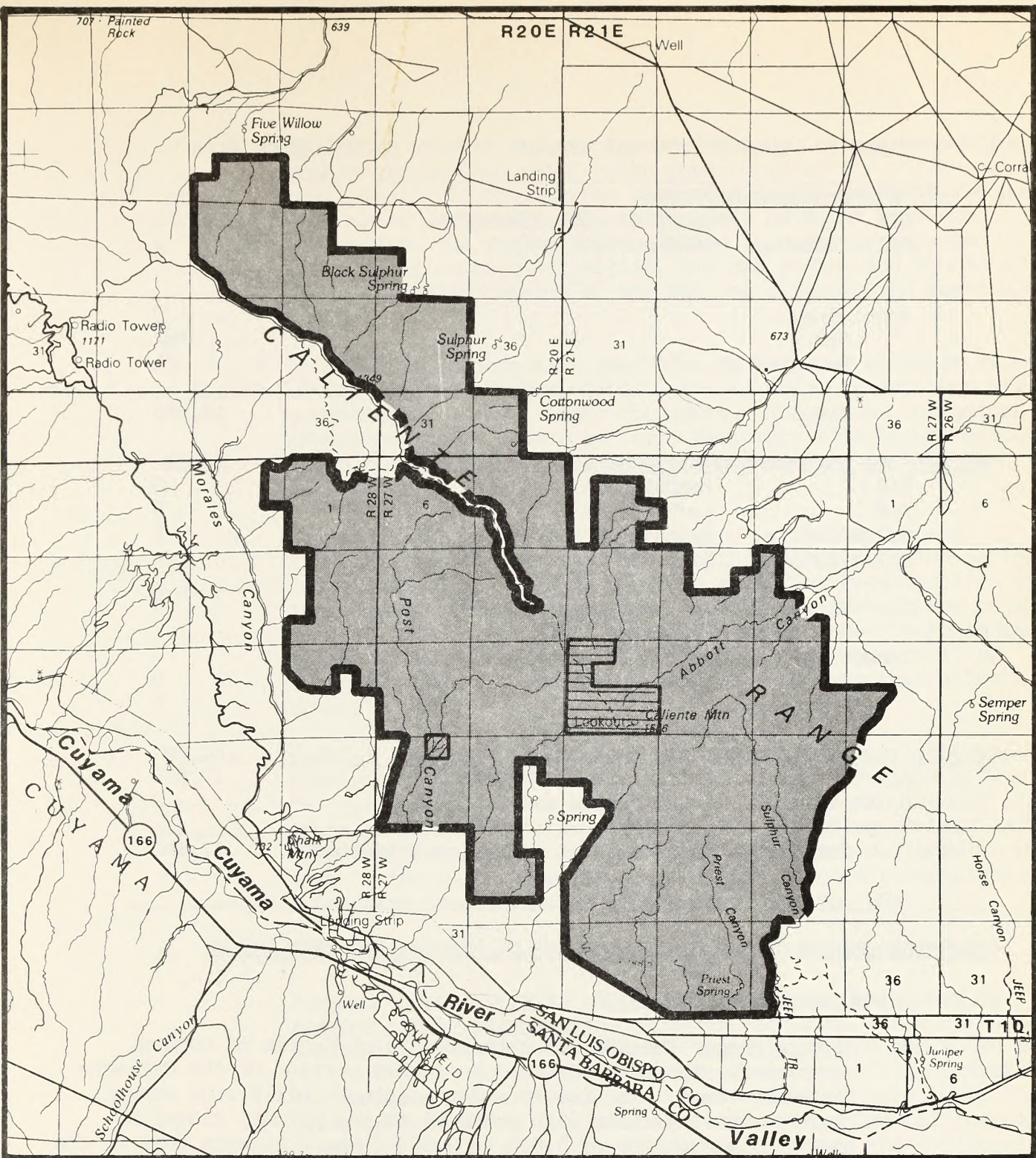
The WSA is recommended nonsuitable for the following reasons: the high potential for oil and gas exploration and development, the moderate potential for phosphate mineral deposits, the maintenance and continuation of the range program, and the continuance of the Caliente NCLWMA, all outweigh the area's wilderness values. Effective management of the area as wilderness would be difficult.

The WSA lends itself to other resource uses. Under the Bureau's recommendation, this area will remain open for oil and gas exploration and development due to the high potential for the occurrence of oil and gas reserves in the entire WSA. In addition, the west-central portion of the WSA has moderate potential for the occurrence of phosphate deposits.

As stated in the Coast/Valley Resource Management Plan, livestock grazing will continue to be maintained at the existing level of 1,699 animal unit months (AUMs). Approximately 15,498 acres of the WSA is currently utilized for grazing. Six spring developments, four reservoirs, one corral with loading facilities, and a two-mile pipeline with troughs currently exist and will continue to be maintained with the use of motor vehicles. A 1,000-acre prescribed burn is proposed on the northern portion of the WSA. This burn is projected to create an additional 100 AUMs of livestock forage.

Being part of the Caliente NCLWMA, the area is managed by BLM in cooperation with CDF&G for the benefit of wildlife resources. Both agencies have been involved in water developments, which have significantly improved the habitat for upland game species. Wilderness designation would constrain management options, including motorized vehicle access to install additional water developments. There are approximately six miles of routes of travel including primitive ways, washes and other unmaintained routes of access which will remain available for vehicular use.

The area's irregular shape, combined with a lack of topographical or cultural features to delineate the boundaries, would make managing the area as wilderness difficult. Extensive signing, and in specific cases, fencing of the boundaries, would be necessary. The cherrystemmed road running along the ridgeline of Caliente Mountain detracts slightly from the natural character of the area.



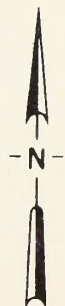
MDM
T32S
T12N
SBM

T11N

T11N
T10N
T1/2N

- NONE RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS
- RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS
- LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS

- SPLIT ESTATE
- STATE
- PRIVATE



**Caliente Mountain
Proposal
MAP-1**

0 1 2 3
MILES

010-042
JUNE, 1988

TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	17,590
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		452
Private		41
Total		<u>18,083</u>
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Study Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<u>0</u>
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	17,590
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>17,590</u>

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The WSA has retained a high degree of natural character. The unit includes a sizable portion of the Caliente Mountain Range. The rugged and precipitous hills rise steeply from the valley floor with peaks along the primary ridgeline reaching elevations of 3,000 to 5,000 feet. Caliente Peak is the most prominent at 5,104 feet. Vegetation ranges from dense chaparral and juniper along the ridgeline to scattered shrubs and annual grasses in canyon floors.

An improved cherrystemmed road on the ridgeline of Caliente Mountain traverses a substantial portion of the unit, detracting slightly from the natural character of the area. Additionally, other imprints of man's activities include vehicle ways, fence lines, evidence of mineral exploration, and firebreaks in various locations in the unit.

2. Solitude: Varied topography and dense pockets of vegetation combine to produce outstanding opportunities for solitude, particularly in those areas removed from the southern and western boundaries of the WSA. In those areas adjacent to these boundaries, the feeling of isolation is severely impacted by oil and gas exploration activities, and the sights and sounds of vehicle traffic outside of the WSA, specifically on State Highway 166.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and unconfined recreation: Along the primary ridgeline, in the juniper flats, within the canyon and in the lower foothills, visitors can find extensive opportunities for isolation as well as unconfined freedom of movement for primitive recreational activities. Extreme daytime summer temperatures and a lack of water limit hiking and backpacking opportunities. Currently there is one public walk-in access to the Caliente Mountain WSA.
4. Special features: The WSA is along the historic flight path of the Federally-listed endangered California condor which flew over the Caliente Mountains enroute to the San Emigdio feeding area from its Machesna Mountain roost. All remaining condors have been captured and set up in a breeding program designed to return them to the wild. The peregrine falcon, also a Federally-listed endangered species occurs and feeds within the WSA.

B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS)

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 10,900 acres of the California Grassland/California Steppe ecosystem and 6,690 acres of the California Grassland/Juniper-Pinyon woodland ecosystems. The Caliente Mountain WSA would increase the diversity of the types of ecosystems represented in the NWPS. The California Grassland Province/Juniper-Pinyon Woodland and the California Grassland Province/California Steppe ecosystems are currently unrepresented in the NWPS.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	NWPS Areas		Other BLM Studies	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
California Grassland/				
California Steppe	0	0	2	17,859
Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	0	0	0	0
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
California Grassland/				
California Steppe	0	0	2	17,859
Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	0	0	0	0

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of 14 major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3 - Wilderness Opportunities for Residents of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	NWPS areas		Other BLM Studies	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>California</u>				
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,515
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Fresno	35	4,048,852	28	460,790
Los Angeles-Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
Merced	33	3,957,550	25	348,753
Modesto	36	4,126,963	81	1,722,326
Oxnard-Ventura	23	2,195,198	85	2,703,260
Riverside-San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
Salinas-Seaside-Monterey	24	3,676,896	45	644,415
San Jose	27	3,765,512	29	352,748
Santa Barbara-Santa Maria				
Lompoc	20	1,166,142	35	528,590
Santa Cruz	27	3,765,512	32	407,890
Stockton	35	4,061,833	46	601,496
Visalia-Tulare-Porterville	34	4,431,635	61	1,681,921

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: There are no other BLM WSAs within 50 air miles recommended for wilderness designation. The Santa Lucia and the Machesna Mountain Wilderness

Areas are located approximately 50 and 40 miles, respectively, northeast of the WSA. The San Rafael and Dick Smith Wilderness Areas are located 15 and 20 miles, respectively, to the south of the WSA. All areas mentioned are managed by the Los Padres National Forest.

C. Manageability

The Caliente Mountain WSA is manageable as wilderness, but only with extreme difficulty. Manageability problems include the overall irregular shape with predominantly sectional (rather than topographic or cultural features) boundaries, leading to difficult recognition on the ground. Frequent signing, detailed maps, patrolling and fencing along various segments of the border would be required to insure the integrity of the unit. Private and State inholdings, including Caliente Peak, have some potential for incompatible development. The cherry-stemmed road leading to the top of Caliente Peak, while providing access to the unit, also opens up the area to the vulnerability of off-highway vehicle trespass.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of information known at the time of the preliminary suitability recommendation: The energy and mineral resource potential of the Caliente Mountain WSA as described in the Affected Environment section of the 1987 BLM Wilderness Recommendations, Central California Study Areas, Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is based primarily on a BLM mineral assessment conducted in 1982, (Caliente Resource Area internal Memorandum, "Mineral Inventory of the Caliente WSA", March 23, 1982). The EIS identified an unknown potential for petroleum and uneconomic occurrences of phosphate. One pre-FLPMA oil and gas lease was known to extend into the WSA, covering 40 acres. Production was occurring on the lease just outside the WSA in February, 1987, under a unit agreement. As long as production continues on the lease, activities may extend into the WSA in the same manner and degree. About 8,720 acres of the WSA (or 48%) were covered by pre-FLPMA oil and gas leases during the late 1940s to 1950s, and again in the early 1970s. Five wells were drilled within the WSA. The Morales Canyon, Taylor Canyon and Russel Ranch Known Geologic Structures (KGSs) are within one mile of the southwestern and western boundaries of the WSA. The eastern portion is within the Caliente Mountain KGS established by the Minerals Management Service on January 17, 1982.

Approximately 800 acres in the western portion of the WSA was classified by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) in 1968 as prospectively valuable for phosphate ("Lands Valuable for Phosphate",

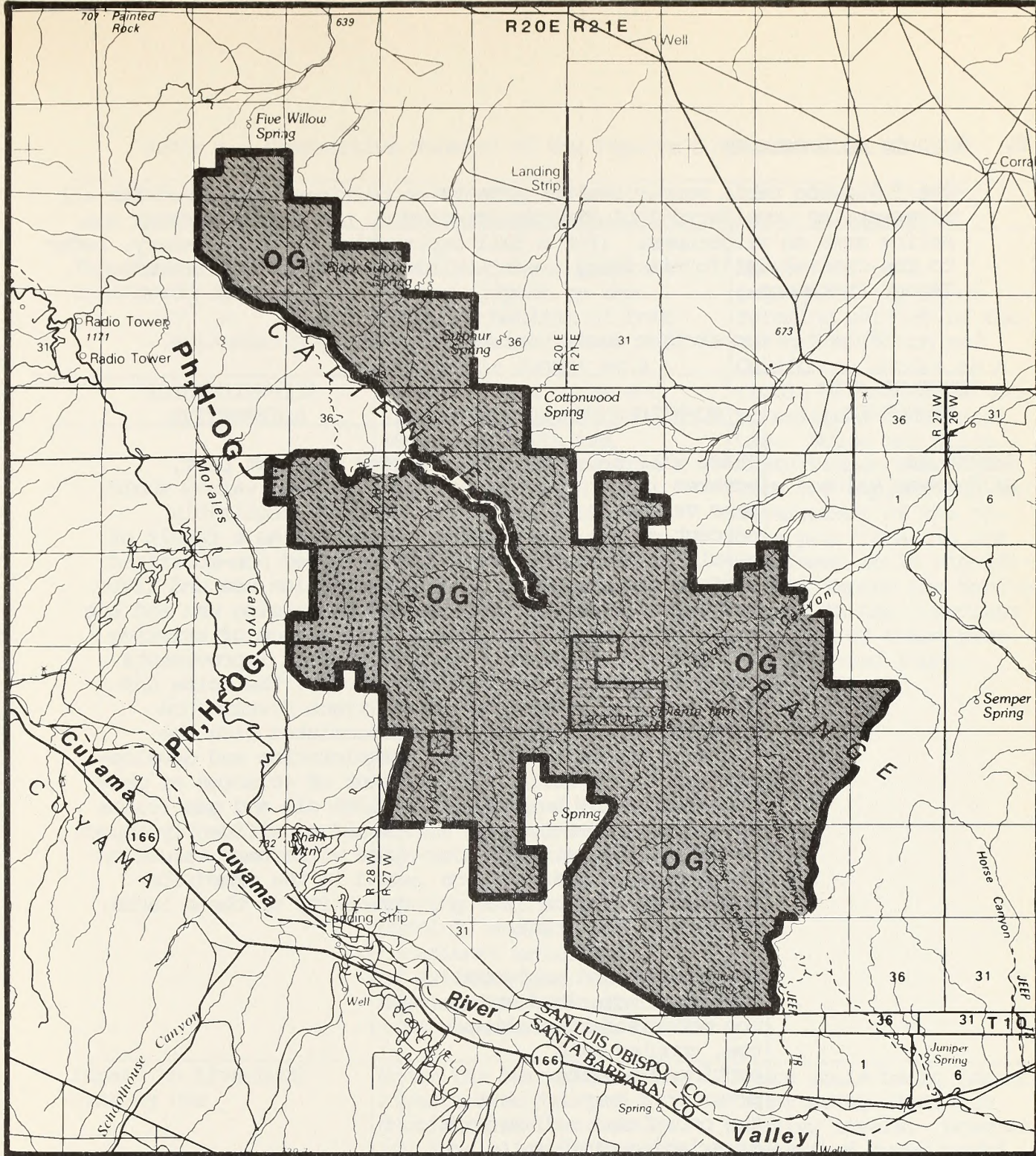
unpublished USGS map, January, 1979). No salable (common varieties of sand, stone, gravel, etc.) or locatable minerals were known to occur in the WSA and no unpatented mining claims were on file with BLM in February, 1987.

According to BLM's mineral assessment in 1982, approximately 1,500 acres in the southeast portion of the WSA had moderate potential for oil and gas development, with a low to moderate potential in the northwest portion. The western portion of the WSA was identified as having moderate potential for the occurrence of phosphate and a zero to low potential for the occurrence of locatable minerals.

2. Summary of significant new mineral resource data collected since the suitability recommendation, which should be considered in the final recommendation: Because this WSA was recommended non-suitable for wilderness by BLM, no USGS or U.S. Bureau of Mines (USBM) mineral surveys were conducted for the Caliente Mountain WSA.

Based on new "confidential" information purchased from GeoMap Company in 1988 ("Structural Analysis of the San Joaquin Basin", California Regional Base Map, No. CA-132, 1988), many new geologic structures were identified within this WSA by BLM. The WSA is predominantly underlain by the Monterey Shale of Miocene age. This new information shows numerous productive intervals for oil and gas that were previously unknown. New information about the oil and gas potential in the WSA is contained in a publication titled "Tertiary Tectonics and Sedimentation in the Cuyama Basin, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties, California" (Bazeley and Fritsche, editors, Cuyama Basin Fieldguide, A.A.P.G. Pacific Section, Annual Meeting, 1988). Based on this new information the entire Caliente Mountain WSA has been reclassified as having a high potential for the occurrence of oil and gas resources using the BLM mineral classification scheme.

New information on the occurrence of phosphate recently made available by the U.S. Forest Service, Los Padres National Forest, (Appendix to Los Padres National Forest EIS, AMS - Minerals Section p. XI-6 to XI-7 and Map #7, unpublished map by J. Joyce and H. Record, 1974-1981) indicates that the west-central portion of the WSA (see attached map) has moderate potential for the occurrence of phosphate deposits. BLM records dated March 25, 1988 show no unpatented mining claims, ten oil and gas leases comprising 1,516 acres, and four oil and gas lease applications comprising 5,575 acres in the unsuitable portion of the WSA.



MDM
T32S
T12N
SBM

T11N

T11N
T10N
T10N

R28W R27W

R27W R26W

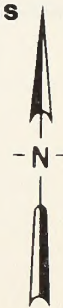
- NONE** Recommended for Wilderness
- Recommended for Non Wilderness
- Land outside WSA Recommended for Wilderness
- Split Estate
- State
- Private

Explanation

- High Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals
- Moderate Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals
- M** Moderate Mineral Potential Location in a High Mineral Potential Area
- H** High Mineral Potential Location in a Moderate Mineral Potential Area

Commodity Symbols

- OG** Oil & Gas
- Ph** Phosphate



Caliente Mountain Mineral Resource Potential



Map-2
010-042

E. Impacts on Resources

The following table summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for all alternatives considered including designation or non-designation of the entire area as wilderness. (For a full explanation of this summary, refer to the Central California Study Areas - Wilderness Final Environmental Impact Statement.)

Table 4 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impact on Wilderness Values	<p>There will be a moderate, adverse impact on wilderness values on 15 to 20 percent of the WSA as a result of the noise and surface disturbance associated with the exploration of the area's oil and gas resources. These impacts, for the most part, will be short-term since production is not anticipated on 90 percent of the wells. Five wells will be developed, however, permanently impairing wilderness values on approximately 2 to 3 percent of the area.</p> <p>The present and projected levels of motorized and non-motorized recreational use, coupled with continued grazing use, prescribed burning, and the occasional maintenance of existing grazing developments, will minimally impair these values.</p>	<p>For the most part, wilderness values would be only negligibly impaired as a result of increased non-motorized recreation use and livestock grazing use and the maintenance of existing livestock improvements. However, the noise and surface disturbance associated with the exploration and development of 40 acres of pre-FLPMA oil and gas leases would significantly impact the wilderness values on and in the immediate vicinity of these lands.</p>

Table 4 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative (Cont'd)

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impacts on Endangered Species	<p>There will be a moderate adverse impact on the foraging habitat of both the peregrine falcon and California condor as a result of the noise and visual intrusions associated with the exploration of the area's oil and gas resources. These impacts will, for the most part, be short-term since production is not anticipated on 90 percent of the wells. Five wells will be developed, however, permanently impairing forage habitat on approximately 2 to 3 percent of the area.</p> <p>The present and projected levels of motorized and non-motorized recreational use, coupled with continued grazing use, prescribed burning, and the occasional maintenance of existing grazing developments will minimally impact these values.</p>	<p>There will be a negligible impact on the foraging habitat of the peregrine falcon and California condor as a result of increased non-motorized recreational use. Noise and surface disturbances associated with the exploration and development of the 40-acre pre-FLPMA oil and gas lease would significantly impact the habitat on and in the immediate vicinity of these pre-FLPMA leased lands.</p>
Impact on Livestock Grazing Use	<p>Under the Proposed Action, livestock forage production will increase by 100 AUMs slightly benefiting livestock grazing use.</p>	<p>There would be no impact on existing livestock grazing levels. However, prescribed burns would be prohibited and the potential 100 AUMs of increased livestock forage would be foregone.</p>

Table 4 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative (Cont'd)

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impact on Oil and Gas Exploration and Development	There will be no impact on oil and gas exploration.	With the exception of one 40-acre pre-FLPMA oil and gas lease, opportunities for oil and gas explora- tion over the entire WSA would be foregone.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

Several comments were received during the wilderness inventory phase. These comments addressed potential mineral values (including uranium and oil and gas reserves) and potential utility siting and route corridors. One comment urged development of rockhounding access into the unit. One comment addressed the adverse influences of man's activities outside the unit.

During the study phase, a public hearing was held in Fresno, California. During the public hearing and the comment period, a total of 56 comments were received, both oral and written, related to this unit. Eleven comments supported the Bureau's no-wilderness alternative. Forty-six comments supported the all-wilderness alternative.

No Federal, State or County agency comments were received specific to this WSA. U.S. Congressman, Leon E. Panetta, favored wilderness designation, citing the value of the area's location within the condor and falcon feeding ranges and stating that cattle grazing standards would not be seriously reduced, access for naturalists and scientists would be retained, and mineral activities on pre-FLPMA oil and gas leases could continue under wilderness designation.

Piute Cypress

CA-010-046

PIUTE CYPRESS WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CA-010-046)

1. THE STUDY AREA --- 5,213 acres

The Piute Cypress WSA is located in Kern County, approximately three miles southwest of the town of Lake Isabella. The WSA is a joint Bureau of Land Management (BLM)/United States Forest Service (USFS) Study Area with 3,453 acres of BLM land and 1,760 acres USFS land totaling 5,213 acres. No private inholdings are located within the WSA (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The WSA is bounded on the north and east by private land and Erskine Creek Road, and on the south and west by Saddle Springs Road.

The heart of the unit is the piute cypress grove. This dense grove of dwarf piute cypress grows on the steep north-facing slope of Bald Eagle Peak. The lower slopes are digger pine, California juniper and dense brush. The steep, rocky, south- and west-facing slopes are dense chaparral. The piute cypress groves have been designated as a BLM Natural Area and USFS Botanical Area in order to preserve the natural values of this unique relict species. The WSA lies within the 306,422 acre Monache-Walker Pass National Cooperative Land and Wildlife Management Area (NCLWMA) established on January 26, 1962 by Public Land Order 2594. The NCLWMA is cooperatively managed with the California Department of Fish and Game under current public land laws.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Prior to this, in 1980, the Bureau prepared a Wilderness Study Report on the Piute Cypress Instant Study Area - a 760-acre parcel included in the present WSA. The recommendation of this report was to defer a recommendation on the parcel until it could be studied with the additional adjacent USFS and BLM land. Suitability recommendations were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) for the Central California Study Areas. A summary of the area's wilderness values was included in the Final EIS. Two different suitability recommendations were analyzed in the EIS: all wilderness and no wilderness.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE --- 0 acres recommended
for wilderness
5,213 BLM acres recommended for
non-wilderness

No wilderness is the recommendation for this WSA. The entire acreage in the WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. The all-wilderness alternative is considered to be the environmentally preferred alternative as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The no-wilderness alternative will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The WSA is recommended nonsuitable. The high potential for the development of locatable mineral resources, continued execution of fire management plans, the degree of community development adjacent to the boundaries, and continuance of the Monache-Walker Pass NCLWMA outweigh the area's wilderness values. In addition, effective management of the area as wilderness would be difficult.

The WSA lends itself to other resource uses. The eastern portion of the study area is in the Erskine Creek Mining District which covers an area about five miles long and two miles wide. The district contains deposits of tungsten, gold, and antimony. As of May 1988, there were 15 mining claims within the boundaries of the WSA. Claims are worked sporadically. Based on updated geologic information, the high potential for the development of locatable minerals, primarily gold and tungsten, continues to exist.

Fire management plans for habitat improvement in the piute cypress grove require the use of mechanized fire equipment, support facilities, and firebreaks. As stated in the South Sierra Foothills Planning Area Public Summary/Rangeland Program Summary, fire is an important management tool for the piute cypress grove; the trees are dependent on fire for seed germination. In accordance with current fire management plans, total fire suppression is practiced in the WSA to protect the bordering community of Bodfish.

Recent community expansion of Bodfish up to the boundary of the WSA indicates probable future demand for additional community development and recreation. Furthermore, the adjacent development presents outside influences that are incompatible with primitive experiences and solitude.

As part of the Monache-Walker Pass NCLWMA, the area is managed in cooperation with the California Department of Fish and Game (CDF&G) for the benefit of its wildlife resources. Both BLM and CDF&G have been involved in habitat improvement projects, especially water developments, which have significantly improved the habitat for upland game species. Wilderness designation would constrain management options; motorized vehicle access to install additional water developments would be restricted in the area. The piute cypress groves are already protected by their designation as a BLM Natural Area and USFS Botanical Area. The three candidate T&E plant species (Piute jewel flower, Squaw root, and Kern River larkspur) also found in the area are protected by the Endangered Species Act.

The area's irregular shape, combined with a lack of topographical or cultural features to delineate the boundaries, would make managing the area as wilderness difficult. Extensive signing, and in specific cases, fencing of the boundaries would be necessary. The WSA's topographical boundaries lend themselves to vehicular trespass from bordering communities. There are approximately three and one-half miles of routes of travel including primitive ways, washes and other unmaintained routes of access which will remain available for vehicular use.

TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	3,453
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
USFS	(surface and subsurface)	1,760
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
Total		<u>5,213</u>
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Study Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<u>0</u>
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	3,453
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
USFS	(surface and subsurface)	<u>1,760</u>
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		3,453
Total USFS Land Not Recommended for Wilderness ¹		1,760

¹The USFS has agreed to allow these lands, located in the Sequoia National Forest, to be reported as part of BLM's WSR. When Congress acts, the lands will be managed in accordance with the current approved management plan.

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The WSA has some degree of naturalness. The unit includes a dense grove of dwarf piute cypress growing on the steep north-facing slope of Bald Eagle Peak. The lower slopes are digger pine, California juniper and dense brush. The steep, rocky, south- and west-facing slopes are dense chaparral.

Imprints of man's activities include: mining scars, primitive vehicle routes, and firebreaks. Numerous mining claims are located in the eastern portion of the WSA. The use of mechanized equipment for fire management and the noise and surface disturbance associated with mining activities adversely impact the naturalness of the WSA.

2. Solitude: Steep canyons and dense vegetation provide excellent opportunities for solitude in the southern end of the WSA. Toward the northern end of the WSA, sparse vegetation, private land practices, the proximity of bordering communities, and generally open terrain provide limited opportunities for solitude. Also, noise associated with mining activities and recreational OHV use on the three and three-quarter miles of primitive road adversely impact solitude.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and unconfined recreation: Opportunities exist in the WSA for users to participate in primitive and unconfined recreational activities. Much of the area is covered with dense, low-lying brush forming natural barriers that restrict human movement within the area. Also, surface disturbances, vehicle use, and construction associated with small-scale exploration and development of mining claims limit primitive and unconfined recreation opportunities.
4. Special features: The WSA contains part of the world's largest piute cypress grove. Portions of this grove were designated as a Natural Area in 1965 for the protection of the rare and unique scientific values of the piute cypress. In addition, there are three candidate threatened and endangered plant species that occur on the western edge of the WSA. They are: Streptanthus cordatus var. pintensis (Piute jewel flower), Perideridia pringlei (Squaw root), and Delphinium purpusii (Kern River larkspur).

B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS)

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 5,213 acres of the Sierran Forest/Juniper-Pinyon Woodland ecosystem. Although this WSA would add diversity to the types of ecosystems represented in the NWPS, the Bureau has recommended two WSAs with similar ecosystems (Owens Peak WSA and Sacatar Meadows WSA) as suitable for wilderness designation.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

<hr/>				
Bailey-Kuchler Classification	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
Domain/Province/PNV	areas	acres	areas	acres
<hr/>				
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
Sierran Forest/ Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	0	5		49,787
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
Sierran Forest/ Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	0	5		49,787
<hr/>				

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of 19 major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3 - Wilderness Opportunities for Residents of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	<u>NWPS areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>California</u>				
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,515
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Fresno	35	4,048,852	28	460,790
Los Angeles-Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
Merced	33	3,957,550	25	348,753
Modesto	36	4,126,963	81	1,722,326
Oxnard-Ventura	23	2,195,198	85	2,703,260
Riverside-San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
Sacramento	46	5,001,817	87	2,479,541
Salinas-Seaside-Monterey	24	3,676,896	45	644,415
San Diego	15	1,043,680	100	3,378,814
San Francisco-Oakland	39	4,473,002	39	565,614
San Jose	27	3,765,512	29	352,748
Santa Barbara-Santa Maria- Lompoc	20	1,166,142	35	528,590
Santa Cruz	27	3,765,512	32	407,890
Stockton	35	4,061,833	46	601,496
Vallejo-Napa-Fairfield	44	4,832,667	74	2,100,862
Visalia-Tulare-Porterville	34	4,431,635	61	1,681,921
<u>Nevada</u>				
Las Vegas	46	3,507,293	311	11,186,463

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas:
The WSA is within 50 air miles of six BLM WSAs recommended for wilderness designation or partial designation; Owens Peak (CA-010-026), Sacatar Meadows (CA-010-027), Rockhouse (CA-010-029), Little Lake Canyon (CDCA-157), Owens Peak (CDCA-158), El Paso Mountains (CDCA-164), and Golden Valley (CDCA-170). The Domeland Wilderness managed by the Sequoia National Forest, fifteen miles to the northeast of the WSA, is the nearest designated wilderness area. Other nearby non-Bureau wilderness areas are the South Sierra and Golden Trout Wilderness Areas, also managed by the Sequoia National Forest, and the Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Park which is managed by the National Park Service.

C. Manageability

The Piute Cypress WSA is manageable as wilderness, but only with extreme difficulty. Manageability problems include the overall irregular shape with predominantly sectional (rather than topographic or cultural features) boundaries, leading to

difficult recognition on the ground. Frequent signing, detailed maps, patrolling and fencing along various segments of the border would be required to insure the integrity of the unit. Control of community expansion and off-highway vehicular trespass would prove difficult. Continued development of the 15 mining claims and the noise and visual intrusions associated with this development would hinder effective management of the area as wilderness. The wilderness values of the area are not outstanding.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of information known at the time of the preliminary suitability recommendation: The geology and mineral resources of the Piute Cypress WSA are described in the Affected Environment section of the 1987 BLM Wilderness Recommendations, Central California Study Areas Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The EIS indicates the WSA may contain deposits of tungsten, gold, antimony, copper, silver, uranium and decomposed granite. The WSA is in the Erskine Creek mining district which produced tungsten, gold and antimony around the turn of the century. Tungsten was also produced in the 1940s and 1950s. The EIS states that metamorphic rocks were the primary source of tungsten, while quartz veins in or near the metamorphic rocks were primary sources of gold and antimony. Gold was also indicated to be in placer material (sand and gravel deposits). The geologic environment was not considered to be conducive to the accumulation of oil and gas or any other leasable minerals; decomposed granite deposits were considered to be too far from local markets and too inaccessible to have any value. According to BLM records in 1986, the WSA was covered by 15 unpatented mining claims, most of which had underground workings or prospects.

Mineral surveys were conducted for USFS Cypress Rare II Area from 1980 to 1982. This Rare II area is adjacent to the southern boundary of the WSA. The results of these surveys were published in 1983 as U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Miscellaneous Field Studies Map MF-1532-A and U.S. Bureau of Mines (BOM) Open-File Report MLA 64-83. USGS/BOM concluded that the eastern half of the Rare II area had a probable mineral resource potential for gold and silver in the igneous (plutonic) rocks of the Isabella Granodiorite formation. Two fingers of this formation extend into the central portion of the WSA. Three fingers of calcareous metamorphic rock are exposed in the eastern and western portions of the WSA. These rocks have yielded tungsten and base-metals from skarn deposits. Based on the above data, this WSA is given a

moderate potential rating for the occurrence of gold, silver and tungsten using the BLM mineral resource classification scheme (see accompanying mineral potential map).

2. Summary of significant new mineral resource data collected since the suitability recommendation, which should be considered in the final recommendation: Because this WSA is recommended non-suitable by BLM, no USGS or BOM mineral surveys were conducted. BLM records dated May 6, 1988, showed no mineral leases, or mineral material sales contracts/permits in this WSA.

The distribution of unpatented mining claims in this WSA is summarized in the table below:

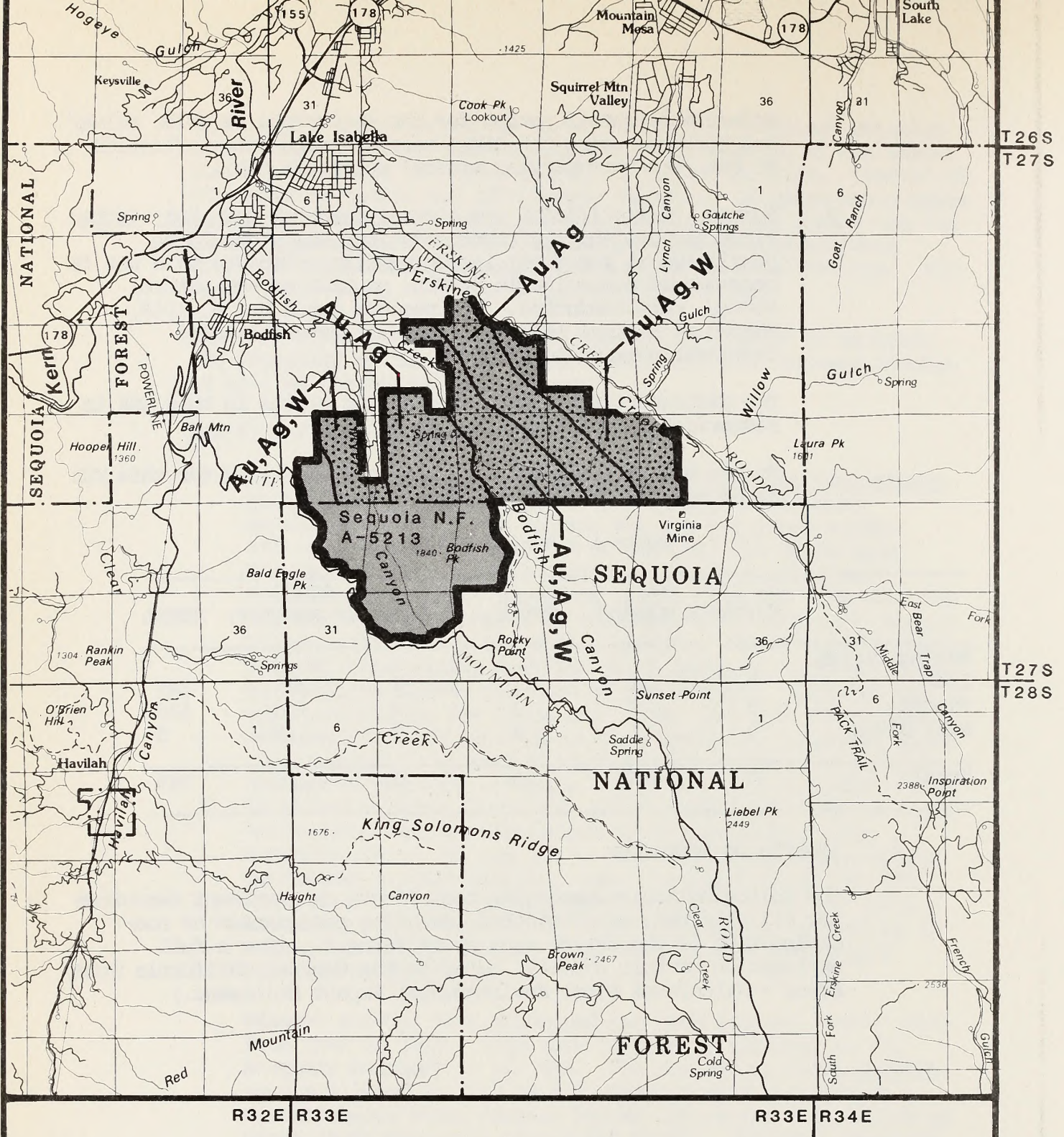
No new mineral resource data has been generated for this WSA as of May 3, 1988.

Table 4 - Mining Claims

	NO.			ACRES		
	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL
Mining Claims						
Lode	0	11	11	0	220	220
Placer	0	3	3	0	120	120
Mill Sites	0	1	1	0	5	5
Total	0	15	15	0	345	345

E. Impacts on Resources

The following table summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for all alternatives considered including designation or non-designation of the entire area as wilderness. (For a full explanation of this summary, refer to the Central California Study Areas - Wilderness Final Environmental Impact Statement.)



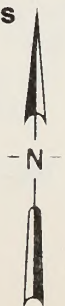
	NONE	Recommended for Wilderness
		Recommended for Non Wilderness
		Land outside WSA Recommended for Wilderness
		Split Estate
		State
		Private

Explanation

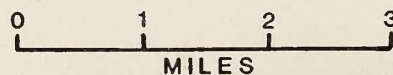
	High Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals
	Moderate Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals
M	Moderate Mineral Potential Location in a High Mineral Potential Area
H	High Mineral Potential Location in a Moderate Mineral Potential Area

Commodity Symbols

Ag Silver
Au Gold
W Tungsten



Piute Cypress
Mineral Resource Potential



Map-2
010-046

Table 5 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impact on Wilderness Values	Wilderness values within 600 acres would be adversely impacted as a result of the noise and surface disturbance associated with the exploration and development of mineral resources. Approximately 300 acres of naturalness would be lost with the perception of naturalness and the sense of solitude impaired within an area of approximately 600 acres as a result of mining activities. Projected recreational OHV use (50 visitor-days per year) would have negligible impacts on wilderness values. The use of mechanized equipment for fire suppression would result in short-term minor impacts to naturalness. Special features would be retained within the WSA.	Wilderness values within 500 acres would be adversely impacted by projected mineral development which would continue as a result of anticipated valid existing rights. Surface disturbance and noise associated with mining activities would result in a loss of naturalness on 250 acres with the perception of naturalness and sense of solitude impaired within 500 acres. Wilderness values throughout the remainder of the WSA would be retained.
Impact on Mineral Exploration and Development*	Mineral exploration and development would not be impacted under the Proposed Action. The WSA would remain open to mineral exploration and development of existing and future mining claims.	Wilderness designation would withdraw the entire WSA from mineral appropriation and entry subject to valid existing right. It is anticipated that the majority of the 39 mining claims within the WSA would be determined to be valid and small scale development of potential mineral resources (other than within valid existing claims) would be foregone.

* Note: New minerals information has been obtained since this analysis; refer to the energy and minerals section in this report.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

During the inventory phase, a few comments addressed potential resource values of the unit, such as off-highway vehicle recreational opportunities and potential oil and gas reserves. One comment recommended wilderness status to protect the area around the Piute Cypress Natural and Botanical Areas. However, the Natural Area, as delineated, already provides an adequate buffer around the actual piute cypress groves. The Natural and Botanical Area designations provide for the protection of the groves.

During the study phase, a public hearing was held in Fresno, California. During the public hearing and the comment period, a total of forty-two comments were received, both oral and written, relating specifically to this unit. Four comments supported the Bureau's no-wilderness alternative. Thirty-eight supported the all-wilderness alternative.

One comment was received from the Sequoia National Forest clarifying the use of the term "public lands".

No other Federal, State or County agency comments were received specific to this WSA.

Cerro Gordo

CA-010-055

CERRO GORDO WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CA-010-055)

1. THE STUDY AREA --- 14,079 acres

The Cerro Gordo WSA is located in western Inyo County, three miles northwest of Keeler, California. The WSA includes 14,079 acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land. There is no State or private land in the WSA (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The northern boundary of the WSA follows a ridgeline road southeast and arcs around a mining area just prior to joining the Cerro Gordo County road. The boundary follows the Cerro Gordo County road southwest and turns northwest at a primitive vehicle route. The boundary proceeds northwest along the primitive vehicle route, then continues cross-country averting areas of past mining activity. At Swansea Road, the boundary heads north until it reaches the ridgeline road.

The Cerro Gordo WSA occupies the southwestern terminus of the Inyo Mountain range. The Inyo Mountains are a linear and narrow high desert range that lie at the western edge of the Basin and Range geomorphic province. The Sierra Nevada geomorphic province is a few miles west of the unit. Confined to the range's west slope, the unit's physical relief is the primary feature of the area. The area is characterized by eroded sedimentary peaks, precipitous ridges, and steep canyons with numerous ephemeral drainages. Elevation ranges from 4,200 feet to 9,200 feet. Vegetation is sparse in the lower elevations and at the southern end of the unit. At these locations, creosote and other low desert shrubs predominate. The unit is also a transition zone between two biotic plant communities, which adds local vegetational diversity. The high elevations and northern slopes support pinyon-juniper stands.

Additionally, the area contains significant historical values as well as outstanding views of the Sierra Nevada to the west and the Panamint Mountain range to the east. A variety of wildlife, including sensitive species candidates, inhabit the unit.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Various suitability recommendations were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) for the Benton-Owens Valley/Bodie-Coleville Wilderness Study Areas. A summary of the area's wilderness values was included in the Final EIS. Three different suitability recommendations were analyzed in the EIS: all wilderness, partial wilderness recommending approximately 87% of the area suitable, and no wilderness.

2.

RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE ---

0	acres recommended for wilderness
14,079	BLM acres recommended for nonwilderness

No wilderness is the recommendation for this WSA. The entire acreage in this WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. The all-wilderness alternative is considered to be the environmentally preferred alternative as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The no-wilderness alternative will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The WSA is recommended nonsuitable due to public input received by the Bureau during the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) public review period. In addition, the area's potential for mineral occurrence was a secondary factor in the non-suitable recommendation.

At the time the DEIS was published in the fall of 1983, the Bureau had recommended the partial-wilderness alternative as its recommendation for the Cerro Gordo WSA. Substantial local comments received during the subsequent public review period ultimately affected the recommendation for this WSA. The DEIS suitable recommendation for this WSA was a primary focus of the public hearing that was held in Bishop, California. Among the various public comments submitted, regarding the DEIS for this unit, Inyo County provided input opposing the suitable recommendation on several occasions. In addition, the Bakersfield District Advisory Council resolved to recommend a change in the DEIS recommendation to non-suitable for wilderness designation.

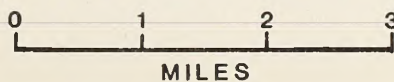
Secondarily, resource conflicts in the WSA include small portions of the WSA which contain moderate to high metallic mineral potential, a major portion of the WSA with moderate potential for nonmetallic minerals, and a moderate potential for uranium for the entire WSA.

Additionally, the southwest corner of the unit has a potential for geothermal resources.

There are approximately ten miles of routes of travel including primitive ways, washes and other unmaintained routes of access which will remain available for vehicular use in the WSA.



**Cerro Gordo
Proposal
MAP-1**



010-055
JUNE, 1988

TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	14,079
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
Total		14,079
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Study Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	14,079
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		14,079

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The Cerro Gordo WSA generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with human influences unnoticeable for a major part of the WSA. The WSA is a rugged environment consisting of eroded mountains, ephemeral drainages, rocky buttes, and narrow ridges. The unit's numerous interior canyon drainages and pristine mountainscapes provide illustrative examples of a land that has retained its natural character. Mixed desert shrubs occupy the lower- and mid-level slopes. The area is a vegetative ecotone containing Mojave Desert flora and Great Basin flora.

Seventy-five percent of the WSA is Mojave Desert scrub species and the remainder pinyon-juniper woodlands. Plant density is low. Creosote bush with some Joshua trees occupy the lower alluvial fans, the mid-elevational mountainous slopes are dominated by shadscale, budsage, and desert needlegrass. The higher elevations support pinyon-juniper trees with a sagebrush understory.

Most of the existing imprints in the Cerro Gordo WSA consist of approximately ten miles of rugged and primitive jeep routes located in the southwest and northwest sections of the WSA. In addition, the Saline Valley Salt Tram (a historical value), and some inactive mining areas are located in the WSA. These features are substantially unnoticeable and minor in the WSA as a whole due to the unit's highly variable topography and size.

2. Solitude: Outstanding opportunities for solitude are available throughout the WSA primarily because of topographic variations. Pinyon-juniper stands also provide vegetative screening at the higher elevations. In addition, the WSA's rugged and desolate nature enhances opportunities for solitude.

This WSA is overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission during approved military operations. The visual intrusions and associated noise create temporary effects on solitude which are deemed acceptable and necessary as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and unconfined recreation: The area provides extensive opportunities to participate in primitive and unconfined recreational activities such as hiking, backpacking, hunting, horseback riding, and nature appreciation. The unit's size, diverse terrain, rugged nature, and sparse vegetation contribute to these recreation opportunities. The area is popular with backpackers who travel from the San Francisco and Los Angeles areas to recreate in this area.
4. Special features: The WSA contains the Saline Valley Salt Tram which is on the National Register of Historic Places. Approximately three miles of the Salt Tram is in the WSA. Construction of the Salt Tram began in 1911.

It was built to carry salt (99% pure) from Saline Valley over the Inyo Mountains into Owens Valley. It is the steepest tramway in the United States. Remnants of past Cerro Gordo mining activity are located outside the WSA near the south edge of the unit. Cerro Gordo, a silver boom town of the 1860s and 1870s, is known for hitting one of the biggest silver strikes in California.

The WSA contains two unnamed spring areas which provide habitat for the Inyo Mountain salamander. The salamander is an endemic species unique to the Inyo Mountains only. It is currently a candidate for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's "threatened or endangered" species list.

Additionally, two candidate species of sensitive plants Eriogonum eremicola and Perityle inyoensis occur within the WSA near the crest of the Inyo Mountains.

The scenic quality of the WSA is outstanding. The WSA's physical relief consists of numerous mountains, steep canyons, and eroded buttes. Of particular interest are the sweeping views of the Sierra Nevada and the Panamint Range that are available outside the WSA. The transition zone of Mojave Desert flora and Great Basin flora enhances the WSA's scientific and educational study opportunities.

B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS)

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 14,079 acres of the Intermountain Sagebrush/Juniper-Pinyon Woodland ecosystem. The Cerro Gordo WSA would not increase the diversity of the types of ecosystems represented in the NWPS.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush/ Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	4	81,301	75	2,156,824
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush/ Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	3	61,701	18	351,754

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of seven major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3 - Wilderness Opportunities for Residents of Major Population Centers

<u>Population Centers</u>	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>	<u>areas</u>	<u>acres</u>
<u>California</u>				
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,515
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Los Angeles-Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
Oxnard-Ventura	23	2,195,198	85	2,703,260
Riverside-San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
Santa Barbara-Santa Maria- Lompoc	20	1,166,142	35	528,590
<u>Nevada</u>				
Las Vegas	46	3,507,293	311	11,186,463

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA is within 50 air miles of nine BLM WSAs recommended for wilderness designation. The John Muir Wilderness and the Golden Trout Wilderness, 18 and 23 miles to the west, respectively, are the nearest designated wilderness areas. These wilderness areas are administered by the Inyo National Forest. Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Park, managed by the National Park Service, is located 23 miles to the west. Other nearby designated wilderness areas include the South Sierra Wilderness and the Domeland Wilderness which are managed by the Sequoia National Forest.

C. Manageability

The Cerro Gordo WSA is generally manageable as wilderness. The steep, rugged natural features inhibit indiscriminate off-highway vehicle use except along portions of the more physically gentle southwest and east boundaries. Some signing, fencing portions of these areas, providing detailed maps, and regular patrolling would be required to insure the integrity of the unit. Indiscriminate off-highway vehicle use is considered to be low.

Under certain circumstances, a portion of the Cerro Gordo WSA would be unmanageable as wilderness. Although the probability is low to moderate, a determination of valid existing mineral rights in the west portion of the WSA could conflict with wilderness management. Development of mining claims which are found to have valid existing rights could impair the area's wilderness values with or without wilderness designation. Wilderness values of naturalness, solitude, and opportunities for primitive recreation experiences would be permanently impaired in this area.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of information known at the time of the preliminary suitability recommendation: The Cerro Gordo WSA is within the BLM New York Butte Geology-Energy-Minerals (G-E-M) Resource Area (GRA). The G-E-M data in the Benton-Owens Valley/Bodie-Coleville EIS in 1987 indicates that the WSA has a potential for occurrence of gold, silver, lead, uranium, limestone, dolomite and geothermal resources.

The G-E-M data indicate that the WSA has two areas of high potential for metallic minerals. One in the extreme northern and one in the extreme western portion of the WSA. The remainder of the WSA is shown as having a low potential for metallics. All metalliferous ore deposits in the GRA are genetically and spatially related to Cretaceous intrusions of quartz monzonite. These intrusives invaded a thick sequence of Paleozoic clastic and carbonate sediments.

The WSA lies immediately northwest of the Cerro Gordo Mining District. The gold, silver, lead and zinc deposits of this district formed as replacement zones within the carbonate rocks as a result of granitic intrusion. Operating in the late 1800s and early in 1900, this district produced approximately \$17 million in precious metals. The area around this district within the WSA is rated in the G-E-M report as having low potential for metallics.

The northern area of high metallic potential is within the Beveridge Mining District near the Burgess Mine. This is a small district of unknown production. The Burgess Mine production is from a gold-bearing quartz-sulphide vein at the contact between Triassic limestones and a diorite porphyry dike. Samples taken from the ore zone ran \$20 to \$40 per ton of gold at 1912 prices. Replacement zones similar to the Cerro Gordo District mineralization are also present in this area. However, the grade and extent of the zones are unknown.

The western area of high metallic potential contains the Flagstaff Mine, the Lost Frenchman Mine, the Pennsylvania Mine and numerous prospects. This area is characterized by silver-lead bearing quartz veins associated with granitic intrusions. No production records were available. The entire WSA was classified as having a moderate potential for the occurrence of uranium. No uranium production has occurred. The Big Horn uranium prospect, however, is located four miles west of the WSA. The moderate potential classification was based on the presence of a favorable environment for emplacement of uranium. The granitic rocks and rhyolitic volcanics are possible uranium sources. Uranium could be

concentrated in any of the formations within the WSA as vein or fracture filling deposits.

The eastern quarter of the WSA is classified as having a moderate potential for the nonmetallic minerals limestone and dolomite. Limestone and dolomite are known to exist in this area. They were classified as having moderate potential due to uncertainties in quality and marketability.

The southwestern edge of the WSA is classified as having a high potential for geothermal resources. This classification is based on the existence of warm springs near the western edge of the WSA and the fact that geothermal exploration holes were drilled in this area which were reported to intersect thermal waters at shallow depths. The G-E-M report erroneously indicates that there were Federally administered geothermal leases in this area. Six noncompetitive leases covering approximately 13,500 acres were applied for in 1982. However, these applications were dropped in 1983 and were never actually leased. As of Spring 1986, 47 unpatented mining claims were located within the WSA.

2. Summary of significant new mineral data collected since the suitability recommendations which should be considered in the final recommendation: No U.S. Geologic Survey (USGS) or U.S. Bureau of Mines (BOM) mineral surveys were conducted in this WSA.

New data were received from Asamera Minerals Inc. (Asamera) in April of 1988 which changes the metallic potential from low/no potential to moderate potential along the eastern margin of the WSA. These data were the result of Asamera's 1986/1987 precious metals exploration activities in the Cerro Gordo Mine area immediately to the southeast of the Cerro Gordo WSA. A total of 94 exploration holes were drilled to an undisclosed depth. Results of 12 of these holes were submitted to BIM. They indicate the interception of mineralization in zones as thin as one and one-half feet and as thick as 110 feet. The grades of mineralization ran from a low of 0.032 ounces gold/ton and 0.18 ounces silver/ton to a high of 2.616 ounces gold/ton and 65.55 ounces silver/ton. The weighted average grade over the 250.1 feet of mineralized intercept was 0.194 ounces gold/ton and 2.019 ounces silver.

Asamera presently holds 452 claims within and outside of the WSA and state that they spent approximately \$1,400,000 during the 1986/1987 exploration program. Asamera representatives have stated that, "While we have not been able to tie the mineralization into proven ore zones, ... we intend to continue working the property in view of developing a mine there."

The Asamera exploration does not directly effect precious metals potential within the WSA due to its location outside of the WSA. However, the geologic exploration targets which yielded such encouraging results at Cerro Gordo, also occur within the WSA.

These geologically favorable environments, therefore, should be classified as having a moderate potential for occurrence of gold and silver.

Historically, the mines of the Cerro Gordo District followed fissure, pocket and chimney ores, siliceous veins and sheared portions of diabase dike. All historic ore targets were, therefore, controlled by north and northwest trending fissures and fractures which formed in the footwall marble of the Cerro Gordo Master Fault (Merriam, C.W., 1963, Geology of the Cerro Gordo Mining District, Inyo County California, USGS Prof. Paper 408) The present-day ore target of Asamera (in addition to the fault-controlled target) is a skarn-type deposit. This target is spatially related to the contact between Cretaceous quartz monzonite intrusions and Carboniferous calcareous marine sediments and metasediments. At this lithologic contact, the heat and gas exchange between pluton and susceptible host rocks, results in a mineralized "halo" beginning at the pluton margin and extending into the carbonate host as much as one-quarter mile (personal communication by Peter Clark, Asamera, 1988). All outcrops of the pluton in this area occur either at or within one mile of the hinge of a large anticline which runs along the crest of the Inyo range. This information led to an interpretation by BIM geologist Mark Ziegenbein in April, 1988 that the pluton may exist at a shallow depth along this hinge in areas where it does not crop out. The area of moderate metallic potential is, therefore, defined by BIM as a zone one-quarter mile wide around plutonic outcrops where carbonate rocks exist in a zone that extends one mile either side of the hinge line of the anticlinal structure. This area is on the eastern edge of the WSA.

A check of mining claim records in April of 1988 showed a significant change in the number of mining claims in the WSA. As stated above, 47 unpatented claims were on record in spring of 1986. As of March 25, 1988, there are approximately 29 unpatented claims within the WSA.

The distribution of mining claims in this WSA is summarized in Table 4 below.

Table 4 - Mining Claims

TYPE	NO.			ACRES		
	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL
Mining Claims						
Lode	0	20	20	0	400	400
Placer	0	9	9	0	360	360
Mill Sites	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	29	29	0	760	760

E. Impacts on Resources

The following Table 5 summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for all alternatives considered including designation or non-designation of the entire area as wilderness. (For a full explanation of this summary, refer to the Benton-Owens Valley/Bodie-Coleville Wilderness - Final Environmental Impact Statement.)

Table 5 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	PARTIAL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Wilderness Values*	<p>The wilderness values of the Cerro Gordo WSA would be subjected to a minor overall impact by not designating the WSA as wilderness. The primary adverse impacts would be highly localized and considered moderate.</p> <p>Mining activities and geothermal development would result in a loss of naturalness on 130 acres and the perception of naturalness would be impaired over an area of 2,200 acres. Primitive and unconfined recreation would be diminished within the mining and geothermal development areas and by continued motorized recreation use which would also result in negligible impacts to naturalness and solitude. Special features would be retained except for possible negligible impacts to the historic Saline Valley salt tram due to continued motorized recreation use and vehicular access.</p>	<p>The All-wilderness Alternative would result in positive benefits to wilderness values due to designation of the entire 14,079 acres. Naturalness and solitude would be significantly retained locally as a result of prohibiting motorized recreation use and geothermal development. Additionally, should mining be precluded, naturalness and solitude would be retained within the projected mining area. However, if a mineral discovery occurs and the valid existing rights can be established (low to moderate probability) there would be a moderate localized impact on naturalness and solitude within the 1,200-acre viewshed surrounding the projected mine site. Special features and opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation would be slightly enhanced.</p>	<p>Wilderness designation would have a slight positive benefit to wilderness values on 12,199 acres as a result of prohibiting motorized recreation use. Within the 1,880 acres not designated wilderness, mining activity and geothermal development would result in a direct loss of naturalness on 130 acres. There would be a moderate impact on the perception of naturalness and solitude on 1,200 acres as a result of mining activities. Geothermal development would result in a minor impact on the perception of naturalness and solitude within 1,000 acres surrounding the development.</p> <p>Additionally, increased motorized recreation use within the non-wilderness portion would negligibly impact wilderness values including potential threats to portions of the historic Saline Valley Salt Tram, a special feature of the WSA.</p>
Motorized Recreation Use	<p>There would be no impact on motorized recreation use. Projected use is anticipated to remain stable at the current 900 visitor-days per year.</p>	<p>There would be only minor impacts to motorized recreation users who would still have access along the boundary road to Cerro Gordo. Wilderness designation would result in 900 visitor-days per year foregone.</p>	<p>Wilderness designation would close approximately 6 miles of primitive vehicle routes within 12,199 acres of the WSA. All motorized recreation use within the wilderness portion of the WSA would be prohibited resulting in 500</p>

Table 5 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative (Cont'd)

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	PARTIAL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Motorized Recreational Use (cont.)			The remaining 1,880 acres would remain open to motorized recreation use on 4 miles of primitive vehicle routes with use projected to increase from the current 400 visitor-days to 600 visitor days per year. Overall, only a minor impact would be incurred due to access opportunities outside the WSA.
Mineral Development*	There would be no impact on mineral development. Under the Proposed Action, the entire 14,079-acre WSA would be open to mineral entry. However, only an underground silver mine is projected for the western portion of the WSA.	There would be a minor impact on mineral development as a result of wilderness designation. The potential for mineral resources is none to low with an area of high potential for metallic minerals. There is only a low to moderate probability of a silver discovery that would result in a determination of valid existing rights leading to development.	There would only be minor impacts on mineral development in the 12,199-acre wilderness portion of the WSA due to low mineral potential at best and the lack of identified mineral resources. Within the 1,880 acres not designated wilderness there would be no impact with development of an underground silver mine projected.
Geothermal Resource Development	There would be no impact on geothermal resource development. The entire 14,079 acres would be open for geothermal exploration and development. Only a small development is projected that would consist of four wellhead generators.	There would be less than a minor impact on geothermal resource development. Exploration and development of geothermal resources including a moderate probability of a small-scale production utilizing four wellhead generators would be foregone.	There would be no impact on geothermal resource development under the Partial Wilderness Alternative. Development of small-scale production is anticipated within the 1,880 acres of the WSA not designated as wilderness. While exploration and development would be prohibited within the 12,199 acres designated wilderness, this portion of the WSA has a low potential for geothermal resources with a low development potential. Therefore, it is anticipated no resource production would be foregone.

*Since this impact summary table was prepared, new mineral data has been obtained from Asmera Minerals, Inc. which may affect the degree of impact to minerals and/or wilderness values. Refer to the minerals resource section of this document.

Table 5 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative (Cont'd)

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	PARTIAL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Inyo Mountain Salamander	There would be only negligible impacts on the Inyo Mountain salamander, if any, as a result of potential future mining activities. There are no management actions projected that would impact either the populations or the habitat.	While there are no surface disturbances or other disruptive activities projected that would likely affect the Inyo Mountain salamander, wilderness designation would preclude any potential threats to the populations or habitats. Therefore, there would be a slight positive benefit.	Wilderness designation would provide a slight positive benefit to the Inyo Mountain salamander.

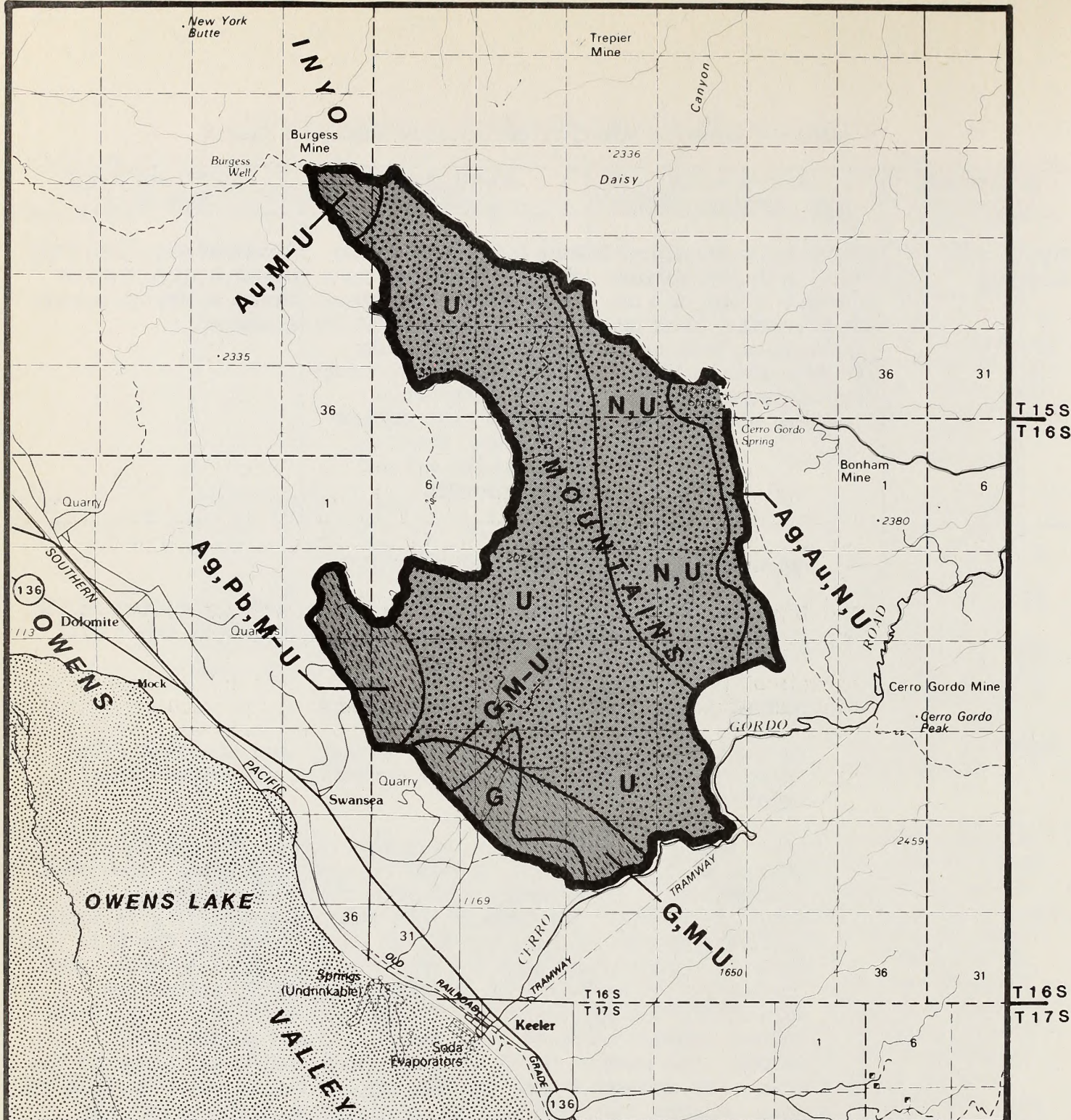
F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

During the inventory phase, a few comments were received which dealt with resource values such as minerals and unique floral features.

After the inventory, comments were received up through the wilderness study process. Several comments supported wilderness designation. Many comments addressed the resource values that exist in the WSA. One comment noted the existence of a valuable quartzite deposit outside the WSA which may occur in the WSA. One comment addressed the need for public access into the area. One comment noted the existence of sensitive plants, historical values, and the adjoining Cerro Gordo Peak WSA (CDCA-124), while another comment addressed the area's wild and rugged scenic values. One comment noted the high flora and fauna values of the area. One comment stated the WSA adjoins the Cerro Gordo Peak WSA while another indicated that the excluded portions of the WSA identified in the DEIS be reincluded for wilderness study. This respondent also noted the existence of the plant Dedeckera. One comment stated the area is used for climbing by the Desert Peak Climbers.



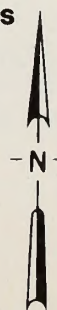
NONE	Recommended for Wilderness
	Recommended for Non Wilderness
	Land outside WSA Recommended for Wilderness
	Split Estate
	State
	Private

Explanation

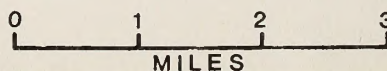
	High Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals
	Moderate Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals
M	Moderate Mineral Potential Location in a High Mineral Potential Area
H	High Mineral Potential Location in a Moderate Mineral Potential Area

Commodity Symbols

Ag	Silver
Au	Gold
G	Geothermal
N	Non-metallic
Pb	Lead
U	Uranium



Cerro Gordo
Mineral Resource Potential



Map-2
010-055

A public meeting and public hearing were held in association with the DEIS for the WSAs within the EIS area. The public meeting was held in Markleeville, California; the public hearing in Bishop, California. Comments were received both orally through the hearing and in writing during the 90-day public review period. A total of 97 comments were received, both oral and written. At that time, 31 comments supported the Bureau's recommendation to designate the area as partially suitable for wilderness; 43 comments supported all wilderness; and 23 comments supported no wilderness.

No comments specific to the Cerro Gordo WSA were received from Federal agencies.

The California Department of Fish and Game has stated its support for designation of the Cerro Gordo WSA as wilderness, but recommended that the Cerro Gordo Mine road remain open for hunting access and that no new grazing permits be issued in this area to ensure retention of wildlife forage.

The Inyo County Board of Supervisors has passed a resolution opposing any additional wilderness areas in Inyo County.

Additional participation by Inyo County at the public hearing and District Advisory Council meeting emphasized their particular objection to wilderness designation of the Cerro Gordo WSA.

Based upon the Inyo County and District Advisory Council comments, which opposed any suitable wilderness recommendation for the Cerro Gordo WSA, the Bureau had modified its DEIS partial-wilderness recommendation (of 14,079 acres) to a no-wilderness recommendation in the subsequent Final EIS.

Southern Inyo

CA-010-056

SOUTHERN INYO WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CA-010-056)

1. THE STUDY AREA ---

36,971 acres

The WSA is located in western Inyo County, four miles east of Lone Pine, California. The WSA includes 36,901 acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land and 70 acres of private land. There is no State land within the WSA (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The northern boundary of the WSA follows the Inyo National Forest boundary east to the crest of the Inyo Mountains. The boundary turns south and proceeds along the ridgeline to New York Butte where it runs along a maintained road. This road veers south near the Saline Valley Salt Tram and heads toward the Owens Valley. Near the lower end of the Salt Tram, the WSA boundary turns north and generally proceeds cross-country to exclude man-made mining imprints. As it continues north, the boundary also runs linearly along the edge of private lands. The boundary terminates at the edge of the Inyo National Forest, immediately north of the Pat Keyes trail.

The area's east boundary adjoins the Inyo Mountains WSA (CDCA-122), which has been preliminarily recommended as suitable for wilderness designation in the California Desert Plan. The area's north boundary adjoins the Inyo National Forest's Paiute roadless area. This area has been recommended for wilderness in the Final Inyo Forest Land Use Plan. The unit's south boundary is adjacent to the Cerro Gordo WSA (CA-010-055), which has not been recommended for wilderness designation.

The Southern Inyo WSA occupies the west-central portion of the Inyo Mountain range. The Inyo Mountains are a linear and narrow high desert range that lie at the west edge of the Basin and Range geomorphic province. The Sierra Nevada geomorphic province is a few miles west of the unit. Confined to the range's west slope, the unit's physical relief is the primary special feature of the area. This WSA consists of extremely rugged and precipitous mountainous terrain incised by narrow, colorful canyons. The mountainous landform overlooks the Owens and Saline Valleys, providing scenic panoramas that also include nearby desert and alpine mountain ranges. Summit elevations exceed 11,000 feet. Keynot Peak and Mt. Inyo are the two highest peaks in the WSA --- each towers to slightly over an impressive 11,100 feet. The unit's ominous hulking canyons challenge hikers and horsemen alike. Scenic values are quite striking, and are heightened during early morning and evening hours. Opportunities for primitive-type recreation are abundant throughout the area. Several hiking trails lace the area. Mixed desert shrubs occupy the lower and mid-level slopes. Vegetation is sparse in the lower foothills; the higher elevations are blanketed by pinyon-juniper stands with a sagebrush understory. Some stands of bristlecone pine are located in the WSA.

Additionally, the area contains significant historical value as well as a variety of wildlife, including sensitive species candidates.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Various suitability recommendations were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) for the Benton-Owens Valley/Bodie-Coleville Wilderness Study Areas. A summary of the area's wilderness values was included in the Final EIS. Three different suitability recommendations were analyzed in the EIS: all wilderness, partial wilderness recommending approximately 77% of the area suitable, and no wilderness.

2.	<u>RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE</u> ---	28,291	acres recommended for wilderness
		8,610	BLM acres recommended for nonwilderness

Seventy-seven percent partialwilderness is the recommendation for this WSA, with 8,610 acres in this WSA released for uses other than wilderness. At the present time, the Bishop Resource Area is preparing a comprehensive Resource Management Plan which will be in accordance with any future wilderness designation of this unit. The all-wilderness alternative is considered to be the environmentally-preferred alternative as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The 77% partial wilderness recommendation will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

Based on data and information available at the time the Final EIS was printed in 1987, partial wilderness is the recommendation for the unit based on the following rationale: The lands proposed contain wilderness values which are outstanding, the special features of the unit warrant wilderness designation, and the wilderness values outweigh the area's potential for other resource uses.

Overall, the wilderness characteristics for the area are outstanding. The imprint of man's work is substantially unnoticeable throughout the unit. The rugged and desolate physical features such as precipitous ridges, abrupt canyons, and massive mountains serve to isolate the visitor from most outside sights and sounds and provide excellent opportunities for solitude. The unit contains several hiking trails which are commonly used by backpackers from urban areas as far away as Los Angeles and San Francisco. Abundant opportunities exist for primitive types of recreation such as hiking, backpacking, camping, hunting, nature appreciation, historical sightseeing, scenic photography, etc.

The unit contains numerous special features which contribute to the area's high wilderness values and warrant wilderness protection. These include portions of the Saline Valley Salt Tram - a National Register historic site, stands of bristlecone pine, habitat for the

Inyo salamander - a sensitive species candidate, desert bighorn sheep, mule deer, prairie falcons, quail, and habitat for cacti.

Riparian zones such as Long John Canyon Spring, French Spring and others enhance localized scenic qualities. These springs provide important riparian habitat for wildlife.

The majority of man's work is outside of the area recommended as suitable for wilderness. However, a few primitive vehicle routes and mining-related surface disturbances are located in the unit. There are approximately 15 miles of routes of travel including primitive ways, washes and other unmaintained routes of access. These features are insignificant in relation to the unit's size and topographic diversity. Manageability would be enhanced if the final wilderness boundary were set back adequately to allow motorized camping on the boundary road from New York Butte to Swanse. Manageability is enhanced by the rugged topography (which precludes most opportunities for vehicle encroachment and outside influences), the area's remoteness, and the buffering effect of the adjoining Inyo Mountains WSA and the United States Forest Service (USFS) Paiute roadless area--both have been preliminarily recommended suitable for wilderness. These recommendations together encompass a much larger, more diverse ecosystem.

At the time the FEIS was printed in 1987, the partial-wilderness boundary was selected to exclude areas of moderate to high mineral resource values and areas where manageability problems were likely to occur. At that time, the suitable recommendation was based on the following narrative excerpted from the FEIS:

"With respect to conflicting resource values, numerous claims are located in the suitable area. However, metallic minerals range from no to low potential. Although uranium potential is moderate, the only known occurrence of this mineral is in the non-suitable portion. Geothermal potential is low. Nonmetallic mineral potential is primarily low, with a relatively small area (approximately 1,000 acres) rated moderate. Although beryl potential is high at a location in the west-center of the WSA, there are no known claims or related activities there. In any case, nonmetallic mineral development potential is considered low due to lack of access and market distance. In addition, nonmetallic minerals (i.e., limestone and dolomite) are abundant outside the suitable area; beryl is also available outside the WSA."

The portions of the WSA not recommended for wilderness in the FEIS include the Burgess Flat area and the lower- to mid-level foothills along the Owens Valley floor. This area includes primitive vehicle routes, mining related surface disturbances, resource conflicts, and some manageability problems. Manageability problems include potential development of a patented mining claim and the numerous unpatented mining claims in areas of moderate to high mineral potential (i.e., moderate to high probability for valid existing rights). Geothermal

potential is moderate. In addition, the western boundary is not easily identifiable due to a lack of distinguishable natural or cultural features. Multiple use management would allow for mineral development and recreational motorized access. A total of 8,610 acres or approximately 23 percent of the unit is recommended as non-suitable.

Since the FEIS, newly available data from the United States Geological Survey (USGS) and the U.S. Bureau of Mines (BOM) has affected mineral occurrence potential ratings and associated areas in the WSA, this makes some of the FEIS minerals data obsolete. The new data coupled with a partial-wilderness recommendation based on data from the FEIS alters the scope and nature of environmental impacts related to minerals, wilderness values and manageability. For further information, see Section 3D, Energy and Mineral Resource Values, and Table 4, Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative for the Southern Inyo WSA.

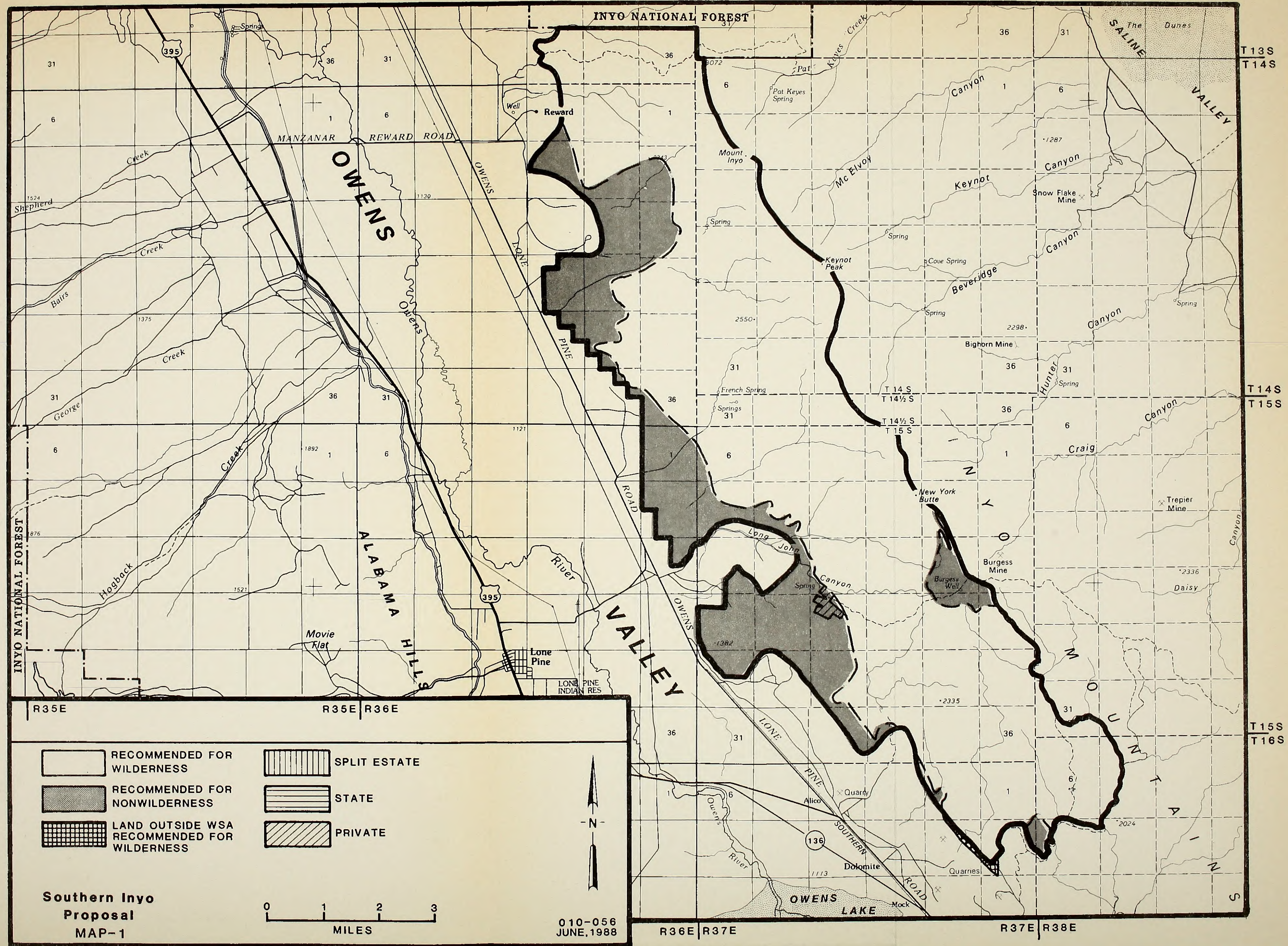


TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	36,901
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		70
Total		<u>36,971</u>
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Study Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	28,291
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<u>28,291</u>
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	8,610
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>8,610</u>

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The Southern Inyo WSA has retained its overall naturalness. It has been affected primarily by the forces of nature with the imprint of man generally unnoticeable within the rugged confines of this WSA. The self-protective nature of the steep, foreboding canyons is a testimonial to the area's naturalness. This WSA consists of extremely rugged and steep mountainous terrain which slopes down toward Owens Valley. Summit elevations range to 11,000 feet. Mt. Inyo and Keynot Peaks slightly exceed the 11,000 foot elevation. Numerous interior drainages exist within the area. Several springs, including Long John Canyon Spring, French Spring and others, provide access to water that can be treated for drinking. The riparian areas surrounding the springs provide a moist and cooler environment

attractive to wildlife and recreational users alike. The mountainous landform towers above the Owens and Saline Valleys, providing scenic panoramas that also include the Sierra Nevada and Panamint mountain ranges. Eighty-percent of the WSA is Mojave Desert scrub and the remainder is pinyon-juniper woodland. Plant density is low. Creosote bush occupies the lower alluvial fans, and the mid-elevation mountainous slopes are dominated by shadscale, big sage, and desert needlegrass. The higher elevations support pinyon-juniper woodlands. The WSA also supports a sub-alpine forest which contains bristlecone pine (Pinus aristata) and limber pine (Pinus flexilis). This forest is considered a unique plant assemblage. This unique assemblage lies along nine miles of the Inyo Crest and is located in a highly remote and inaccessible area. Forest trend is considered stable.

Within the portion of the WSA recommended for non-wilderness, naturalness has been locally impaired by ten miles of primitive vehicle routes as well as associated inactive mining areas. Evident mining surface imprints include localized adits, tunnels, prospects, and other signs of related use. A patented mining claim also exists in the WSA. These man-made imprints in the WSA are located along the unit's western periphery. The area recommended suitable contains approximately five miles of primitive vehicle routes, some inactive mining areas, the abandoned Saline Valley Salt Tram (a historical value), and several old mining trails. Due to the WSA's large size and rugged physical characteristics, the cumulative effect of these influences on naturalness is very low.

2. Solitude: Outstanding opportunities for solitude are abundant in the Southern Inyo WSA. Some of these opportunities are slightly compromised along the western periphery of the unit where existing primitive vehicle routes and inactive mining areas are located.

In the vast majority of the WSA, fewer signs of man's influence enhance these outstanding opportunities for solitude. Nonetheless, the WSA's diverse terrain which includes remote, high-walled canyons and a long, jagged mountain ridge in addition to its size and vegetative screening at higher elevations, are elements that enhance visitors' opportunities to find isolation throughout the unit. Panoramic vistas and the commanding spaciousness of the Sierra Nevada, Saline Valley, and the Panamint Mountain range heighten one's sense of seclusion.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and unconfined recreation: Visitors to this WSA can easily find outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation. The WSA's size, physical features, exhilarating ridgetop viewsheds, old mining trails, unique flora and fauna, and historical features are elements which attract a variety of visitors. These visitors can participate in hiking, backpacking, camping, hunting, nature appreciation, historical sightseeing, scenic photography, and other activities.

In recent years, the WSA has become increasingly popular for backpacking and hiking. Old mining trails currently in use by these recreationists include the Pat Keyes Historic Mining Trail, the Long John Canyon Trail, the Forgotten Pass Trail, and the Union Wash Trail. Visitor use in the WSA is primarily of a dispersed nature.

4. Special features: The WSA contains numerous special features of noteworthy interest. Three and one-half miles of the Saline Valley Salt Tram is located within the WSA. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Salt Tram was first constructed in 1911 to carry salt (99% pure) from Saline Valley over the Inyo Mountains and into Owens Valley. It is the steepest tramway in the United States. Additionally, the Pat Keyes Historic Mining Trail (approximately six miles) is located in the unit. This trail was built between 1890 and 1910 to serve mines on the Inyo Crest.

Stands of bristlecone pine trees which are the world's oldest living plants occupy portions of the WSA's precipitous crest. The bristlecones are perhaps one of the world's most photogenic trees. These grotesque and gnarly trees eke out an existence in an inhospitable environment that has shallow, nutrient-poor soils, and a growing season measured in weeks. Gale-force winds also blast the ridges occupied by the trees.

In addition, the WSA contains habitat (Long John Canyon and French Spring Canyon) for the Inyo Mountain salamander. The salamander is an endemic species unique to the Inyo Mountains only. It is currently a candidate for the United State Fish and Wildlife Service's threatened and endangered species list. Prairie falcon nesting sites are located in the Long John Canyon area and in a nearby unnamed canyon.

The scenic grandeur of this WSA is truly captivating. The highly eroded, very steep northern portion of the unit supports little vegetation, but displays dramatic combinations of colors, hues, and erosional patterns. During the twilight hours, the brilliant colors that reflect off the range mesmerize area visitors.

Striking and sweeping panoramas of the Sierra Nevada and the Panamint Range, which are outside the unit, are observable along the WSA's higher elevations as well as its main ridges. The area's wilderness values are considered to be its rich scenic, botanical and historical characteristics.

B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS)

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 36,971 acres of the Intermountain Sagebrush/Juniper-Pinyon Woodland ecosystem. The Southern Inyo WSA would not increase the diversity of the types of ecosystems represented in the NWPS.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush/ Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	4	81,301	74	2,114,402
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush/ Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	3	61,701	18	328,932

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of seven major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3 - Wilderness Opportunities for Residents of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>California</u>				
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,515
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Los Angeles-Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
Oxnard-Ventura	23	2,195,198	85	2,703,260
Riverside-San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
<u>Nevada</u>				
Las Vegas	46	3,507,293	311	11,186,463
Reno	39	4,647,230	175	6,904,809

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas:
The WSA is within 50 air miles of nine BLM WSAs recommended for wilderness designation. The John Muir Wilderness and the Golden Trout Wilderness, 18 and 23 miles to the west, respectively, are the nearest designated wilderness areas. These wilderness areas are administered by the Inyo National Forest. Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Park, managed by the National Park Service (NPS), is located 23 miles to the west. Other nearby designated wilderness areas include the South Sierra Wilderness and the Domeland Wilderness which are managed by the Sequoia National Forest.

C. Manageability

The area recommended as suitable is manageable as wilderness. Manageability is enhanced due to natural barriers, which would prevent vehicle access, and boundaries which are defined by cultural and natural features. It is also aided by the adjoining Inyo Mountain WSA, and Inyo National Forest RARE II area, as both have been preliminarily recommended suitable for wilderness designation. Some signing and periodic patrolling would be required to maintain the unit's natural integrity.

No conflicts are anticipated over water rights to the springs. Each spring within the WSA has been inventoried and the State of California has been notified of the Bureau's Federal water rights claim under Public Water Reserve 107's.

In light of newly available minerals data received from the United States Geological Survey (USGS) and U.S. Bureau of Mines (BOM) since the FEIS was printed, the nature and scope of manageability problems is likely to change.

A portion of the WSA not recommended as suitable for wilderness designation includes a set back along the Swansea Road from New York Butte south to the intersection with the ridge road. This setback would allow road maintenance and vehicle parking in the existing primitive campsites along the road.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of information known at the time of the preliminary suitability recommendation: The Southern Inyo WSA is within the BLM New York Butte Geology-Energy-Minerals (G-E-M) Resource Area (GRA). The G-E-M data indicate that the WSA has a potential for occurrence of gold, silver, lead, uranium, dolomite, limestone, beryllium, and geothermal resources.

The 1983 G-E-M data indicated that the WSA has three areas of high and one area of moderate metallic mineral potential. The affected environment section of the 1987 FEIS incorrectly states that these areas are in the "...southern portion of the WSA." The G-E-M report shows these areas in the northwest, west-central, east-central as well as the southern portion of the WSA.

The northwestern area is rated as having a high potential for the occurrence of silver with gold and lead present as secondary ore metals. This rating is based on the existence of the Monte Carlo Mine in this area. The Monte Carlo Mine consists of eight adits and over 3,000 feet of underground workings. The westernmost adit was excluded from the WSA, however, all other workings are within the WSA boundary. It is credited with the production of more than 100,000 ounces of silver before 1902 and an unknown amount of post-1902 production. As part of the G-E-M analysis, a sample of ore was taken from one of the dumps. This sample assayed 0.005 oz/ton gold, 11.40 oz/ton silver and "major" lead. With enough tonnage, this grade of ore could make a profitable mine. Under the BLM's partial-wilderness recommendation, approximately 85 percent of this high potential area would be excluded from wilderness.

The east-central area of the WSA has an area of high potential for the occurrence of gold, silver, and lead. This rating is based on the existence of the Burgess Mine and the Beveridge Mining District located in this area. The District is known to have produced gold, however, the amounts and dates of production are unknown. A sample was taken during the G-E-M analysis which assayed 0.004 oz/ton gold,

9.87 oz/ton silver and 4% lead. The area of high potential was defined by the area of old diggings, bulldozer cuts, and the area of rock alteration around them. Under the BLM's partial-wilderness recommendation, approximately 60 percent of this high potential area would be excluded from wilderness.

The southern area of high metallic potential contains the Flagstaff Mine, the Lost Frenchman Mine, the Pennsylvania Mine and numerous prospects. This area is known as a silver and lead producing district but no production records were available. A sample taken at the portal of the Flagstaff Mine during the G-E-M analysis assayed 0.6% lead. Under the BLM's partial wilderness recommendation, all of this area of high metallic potential would be excluded from wilderness.

The west-central area of moderate metallic potential contains the Long John Mine, the Black Warrior Mine, a group of patented mining claims and numerous prospects and tunnels in the area of Long John Canyon. Gold, silver, and lead were produced from these mines, however, production dates and records were not found. Samples taken from portals in this area during G-E-M analysis yielded a maximum of 0.008 oz/ton gold 2.54 oz/ton silver, 0.06% lead and 0.35% zinc. Under the BLM's partial-wilderness recommendation, approximately 80% of this moderate potential area would be excluded from wilderness.

Most of the WSA was classified as having a moderate potential for the occurrence of uranium. No uranium production has occurred. The Big Horn uranium prospect is located in the western portion of the WSA. The moderate potential classification was based on the presence of a favorable environment for emplacement of uranium. The granitic rocks and rhyolitic volcanics are possible uranium sources and uranium could be concentrated in any of the formations within the WSA as vein-type or fracture-fill deposits. Under BLM's partial-wilderness recommendation, nearly all of this moderate uranium potential area would remain within wilderness. An area along the southwest edge of the WSA was designated as having moderate potential for the occurrence of the nonmetallic mineral limestone and dolomite. The carbonates are known to exist in the area but it was classified as having moderate potential due to uncertainties in their quality and marketability. Under BLM's partial-wilderness recommendation, approximately 80% of this moderate potential area would be excluded from wilderness.

Two small areas within the WSA have potential for the occurrence of beryl. A small area in the center of the WSA has high beryllium potential due to reported production of

small amounts of beryl. A beryl occurrence is reported along the western edge of the WSA which was classified as having moderate potential in the G-E-M report. Under the BLM's partial wilderness recommendation, the moderate potential for beryl would be entirely excluded from wilderness; the area of high potential for beryl would remain within wilderness.

The western edge of the WSA is classified as having a moderate potential for geothermal resources. This classification is based on the existence of warm springs near the western edge of the WSA. Also, geothermal exploration holes were drilled just south of this area which were reported to intersect thermal waters at shallow depths. This moderate potential area is the structural extension of a high potential area to the south. Under BLM's partial-wilderness recommendation, approximately 90% of this moderate potential area would be excluded from wilderness.

As of Spring 1986, approximately 170 unpatented mining claims were located within the WSA.

2. Summary of significant new mineral resource data collected since the suitability recommendation, which should be considered in the final recommendation: As required by FLPMA, BOM and USGS conducted mineral surveys (specific to locatable minerals) on the portion of the WSA recommended as suitable by BLM. The BOM report (Sabine, C., and others, 1986, Mineral Resources of the Southern Inyo Study Area, Inyo County, California: BOM, Open file Report, MIA-55-86.) is summarized in a joint report published by USGS. (Conrad, J.E., Sabine, C., and others, 1987, Mineral Resources of the Southern Inyo Wilderness Study Area, Inyo County, California: USGS Bull. 1705-B.)

The BOM/USGS surveys were more intensive than the G-E-M survey and the on-the-ground detail is more complete. For this reason, the potentials described in the BOM/USGS report are generally lower than the G-E-M potentials. Under BOM/USGS criteria it was possible for a prospect within a historic mining district which assayed 0.22 oz/ton gold minable grade (with enough tonnage) to have less than low potential (see USGS prospect #44, pp B24). Under the G-E-M classification scheme, this area would have a high potential rating.

There are two areas of high potential and one area of moderate mineral potential (gold, silver, lead, and zinc) in the extreme northwestern portion of the WSA (Reward Mine area). Under BLM's partial-wilderness recommendation, approximately 75% of this high potential and 100% of this moderate potential area would remain within wilderness. The east-central high potential area (gold, silver, lead, zinc)

is modified by eliminating the southern portion and elongating the area northward. Under BLM's partial-wilderness recommendation, approximately 75% of this high potential area would remain within wilderness.

The boundary of the southern high potential area (silver, lead, zinc) is expanded northward. Under BLM's partial-wilderness recommendation, approximately 80% of this high potential area would remain within wilderness. The northwestern area of high metallic potential and the west-central area of moderate metallic potential remain essentially the same with minor boundary adjustments.

Information supplied to the BLM by the claimant of the Cynthia claims (T. 14 S., R. 36 E., sections 23 and 26) caused BLM to re-evaluate the potential of this area. The claimant submitted assays of his concentrates which yielded a maximum of 1.86 oz/ton gold, 26.68 oz/ton silver, 8.49 oz/ton platinum and 3.85 oz/ton palladium.

The BLM duplicated the claimant's concentration process using the claimant's own equipment and the same assay laboratory that reported the high values. This was done in order to obtain a concentrate-to-ore ratio and to convert the claimant's assays into oz/ton of ore. This analysis indicates a whole-rock value of \$1.00 to \$4.00 per ton platinum (at \$400.00/ounce platinum). Grey metallic nuggets were recovered during the concentration process. These nuggets were moderately magnetic and malleable. They could be a platinum containing natural alloy. Two chip samples were then taken by BLM within the shear zone that the claimant had been sampling. The samples were analyzed by the neutron activation methods. All platinum group minerals were below the detection limits of the analysis and only trace amounts of gold were indicated in both samples.

During the BOM/USGS survey, eleven chip samples were collected from shear zones on these claims. Fire assays were performed. One sample yielded 0.8 oz/ton silver and 3.9% copper. Ten had low precious- and base-metal content. No platinum group minerals were detected. Atomic absorption assays by one laboratory gave relatively high platinum and palladium values for the Cynthia claims concentrate (0.6 oz/ton gold, .016 oz/ton silver, 0.72 oz/ton platinum, 0.10 oz/ton palladium). This result was not duplicated by BOM fire assays on identical sample splits. This is due to metallurgical properties of the Cynthia claim material that are not well understood. The present information available to BLM justifies a moderate potential for platinum in this area according to the BLM classification scheme.

The distribution of unpatented mining claims in the WSA according to BLM records dated May 6, 1988 is shown in the table below:

Table 4 Mining Claims

TYPE MINING CLAIMS	NO.			ACRES		
	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL
Lode	38	36	74	760	720	1,480
Placer	4	4	8	160	160	320
Mill Sites	0	4	4	0	20	20
Total	42	44	86	920	900	1,820

E. Impacts on Resources

The following table summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for all alternatives considered including designation or non-designation of the entire area as wilderness. (For a full explanation of this summary, refer to the Benton-Owens Valley/Bodie-Coleville Wilderness - Final Environmental Impact Statement.)

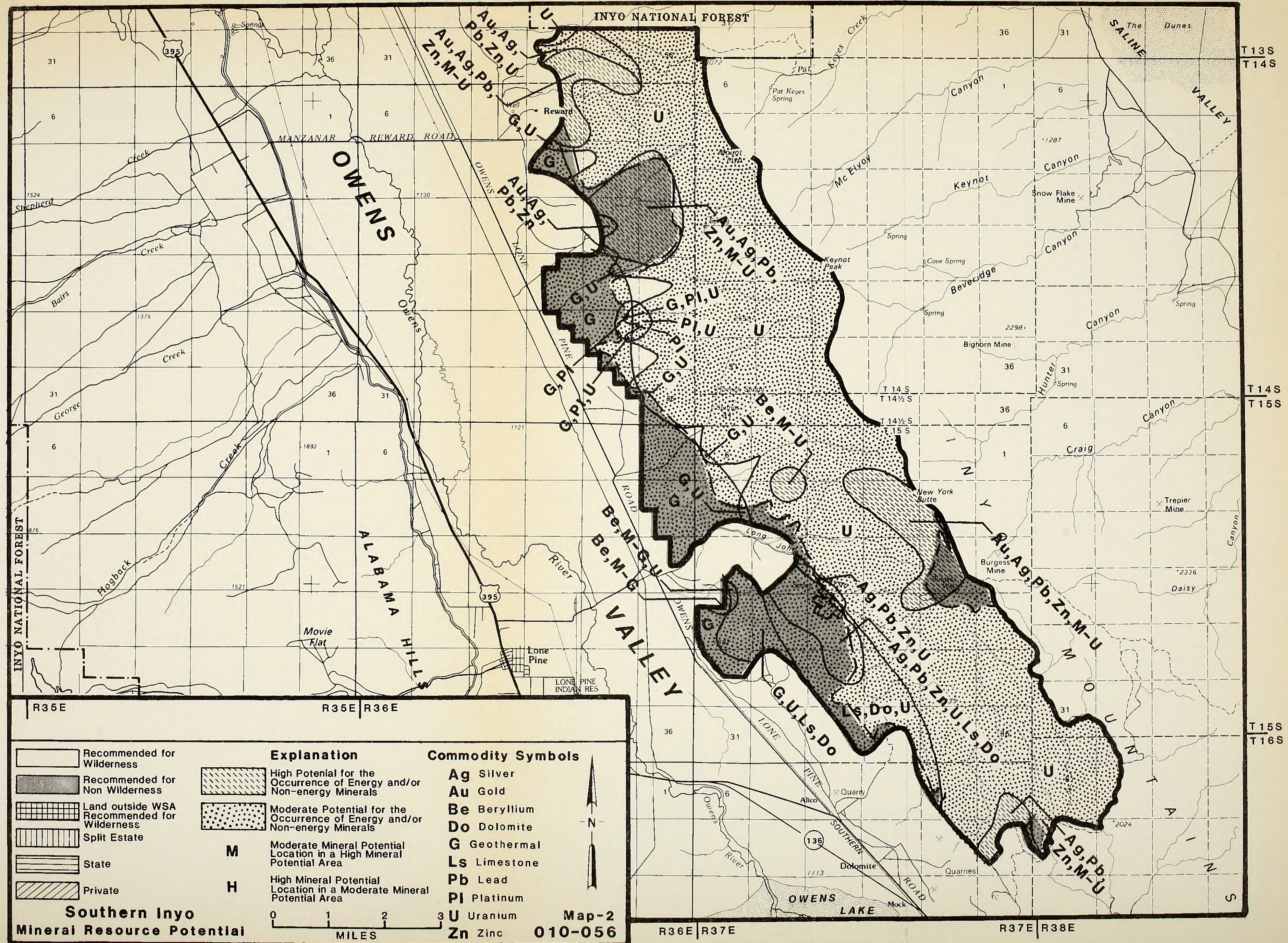


Table 5 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (PARTIAL-WILDERNESS)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE
Wilderness Values	<p>Under the Proposed Action all wilderness values would be retained and slightly enhanced within the 28,291 acres designated wilderness by eliminating motorized recreation use. Negligible localized impacts would occur as a result of constructing two wildlife guzzlers with the perception of naturalness impaired on a total of 8 acres.</p> <p>Within the 8,610 acres not designated wilderness, motorized recreation use would result in negligible impacts to naturalness, solitude, and primitive and unconfined recreation. Projected mineral development would result in a loss of naturalness on 115 acres with solitude and the perception of naturalness impaired on 500 acres in the southern portion of the WSA. Overall, the impacts to wilderness values under the Proposed Action would be negligible.</p>	<p>All-wilderness values would be retained and slightly enhanced under the All Wilderness Alternative due to the elimination of 100 visitor days of motorized recreation use on 15 miles of existing primitive vehicle routes. Should mineral development occur there would be a direct loss of naturalness on 115 acres. Additionally, the perception of naturalness and solitude would be lost within a 500-acre viewshed.</p> <p>Opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation as well as special features would be retained and slightly enhanced within the WSA.</p>	<p>The wilderness values within the WSA would be subjected to a minor overall impact by not designating the area wilderness. However, the primary impacts would be highly localized. Mineral development would result in a direct loss of naturalness on 100 acres and the perception of naturalness and solitude would be impaired over an area of 500 acres. Continued motorized recreation use (1,000 visitor days) would locally result in negligible impacts to naturalness and solitude. Primitive and unconfined recreation would be diminished within the 115 acres projected for mining and within the vicinity of the 15 miles of primitive vehicle routes used for motorized recreation. Special features would not be significantly impacted, however, the primary threat would result from mining activity in the vicinity of the Saline Valley Salt Tram.</p>

Table 5 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative (Cont'd)

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (PARTIAL-WILDERNESS)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	NO-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Motorized Recreation Use	Overall there would be a minor impact to motorized recreation. The effects of closure of 28,291 acres of the WSA including 5 miles of primitive vehicle routes eliminating 600 visitor days per year of motorized recreation use would be partially offset by an increase of 200 visitor days within the 8,610-acre non-wilderness portion of the WSA. There would be a net loss of 400 visitor days of motorized recreation use per year under the Proposed Action.	As a result of designating the entire WSA as wilderness, 1,000 visitor days of motorized recreation use would be foregone. Since access opportunities to the Inyo Mountains are limited, this would result in a moderate impact.	There would be no impact on motorized recreation use. The entire WSA would remain open for motorized recreation use with the current 1,000 visitor days of use projected to remain stable.
Mineral Development	There would be no impact on mineral resources. While exploration and development would be foregone within the 28,291 acres designated wilderness, this area generally has no potential to a low potential for development of mineral resources. Potential development of a silver mine could occur within an area of high mineral potential within the 8,610 acres not designated wilderness.	Overall there would only be a minor impact on development of mineral resources as a result of wilderness designation. Should a discovery of silver occur within the area of high metallic mineral potential in the southwest portion of the WSA, determination of valid existing rights would allow development under wilderness designation. Development of the potential silver deposit would be foregone if a discovery does not occur prior to designation. Other potential mineral resources would also be foregone as exploration and development activities would be prohibited.	The entire WSA would be open to mineral entry, therefore, there would be no impact on mineral development. Development of a potential underground mine for silver is the only mining activity projected for the WSA.

Table 5 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative (cont.)

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (PARTIAL-WILDERNESS)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	NO-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Inyo Mountain Salamander	There would be a slight positive benefit for the Inyo Mountain salamander. Habitat for both known populations would be within the portion of the WSA designated wilderness.	There would be a slight positive benefit for the Inyo Mountain salamander as a result of the entire WSA being designated wilderness.	There would be only negligible impacts to the Inyo Mountain salamander as the result of potential or unforeseen activities within the WSA. There are no management actions projected that would impact either the populations or the habitat.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

During the inventory phase, a few comments were received which dealt with other resource values such as minerals and unique floral features.

After inventory, comments were received through the Wilderness Study process. Several comments supported wilderness designation for the WSA, while one or two comments opposed it. One comment noted the wild and rugged scenic values of the WSA while another stated that the area's extreme desolation actually detracted from its wilderness value. One letter noted the existence of a valuable quartzite deposit outside the WSA which was thought could extend into the WSA. This same comment indicated the existence of beryl deposits inside the WSA. One comment stated the ridgeline road should be excluded from the WSA; on the other hand, another comment noted the need for public access into the area. One comment pointed out the high values of flora and fauna in the WSA.

Another individual indicated that excluded portions of the WSA should be re-included. This respondent also noted the existence of the plant Dedeckera, which is located on the eastern slope of the Inyo Mountains. One comment indicated that the area is used by the Desert Peak Climbers and that the Southern Inyo WSA should be combined with the adjoining California Desert District Inyo Mountains WSA.

A public meeting and public hearing were held in association with the DEIS for the WSAs within the EIS area. The public meeting was held in Markleeville, California; the public hearing in Bishop, California. Comments were received both orally through the hearing and in writing during the 90-day public review period. A total of 99 comments were received, both oral and written. Thirty-one comments supported the Bureau's recommendation to designate the area as partially suitable for wilderness; 43 comments supported the all-wilderness alternative, 16 comments supported the no-wilderness alternative. In addition, 9 comments supported a modification of the Bureau's partial-wilderness recommendation, favoring less acreage to be recommended suitable.

No comments specific to the Southern Inyo WSA were received from Federal agencies.

The California Department of Fish and Game has stated its support to designate the Southern Inyo WSA as wilderness, but also recommends that Cerro Gordo Mine road (WSA boundary road) remain open for hunting access and that no new grazing permits be issued in this area to retain wildlife forage.

The Inyo County Board of Supervisors has passed a resolution opposing any additional wilderness areas in Inyo County. Subsequent to the passage of this resolution, the Inyo County Planning Department submitted a letter supporting wilderness designation for a portion of the WSA located north of Long John Canyon and east of the 6,000-foot contour elevation.

Independence Creek

CA-010-057

INDEPENDENCE CREEK WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CA-010-057)

1. THE STUDY AREA --- 6,458 acres

The Independence Creek WSA is located in central Inyo County, approximately eight miles south of Independence, California. The WSA includes 6,458 acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land and no State or private land (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The northern boundary follows a maintained road paralleling George Creek to the east. The boundary turns south and follows an irregular pattern adjacent to non-public land until it joins a maintained road. The boundary travels west along this road turning north at the Inyo National Forest boundary. The western edge of the WSA follows the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) boundary until it intersects the road paralleling George Creek on the north.

The WSA lies in the transition zone of the Basin and Range and the Sierra Nevada geomorphic provinces. Composed of sedimentary outwash from the Sierra Nevada mountain range, the WSA consists of a broad, rocky, alluvial apron at the eastern base of the Sierra. The WSA gently slopes downward to the east. Elevation ranges from 4,000 feet to 5,600 feet. Topographical relief is generally uniform providing little variation in the landscape. Shallow dry washes are scattered throughout the unit. The northern portion of the unit is traversed by George Creek which is a perennial stream. The WSA is composed of mixed desert shrubs.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Various suitability recommendations were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) for the Benton-Owens Valley/Bodie-Coleville Wilderness Study Areas. A summary of the area's wilderness values was included in the Final EIS. Two different suitability recommendations were analyzed in the EISs: all wilderness and no wilderness.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE --- 0 acres recommended
for wilderness
6,458 BLM acres recommended
for nonwilderness

No wilderness is the recommendation for this WSA. The entire acreage in this WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. The all-wilderness alternative is considered to be the environmentally-preferred alternative, as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The no-wilderness alternative will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

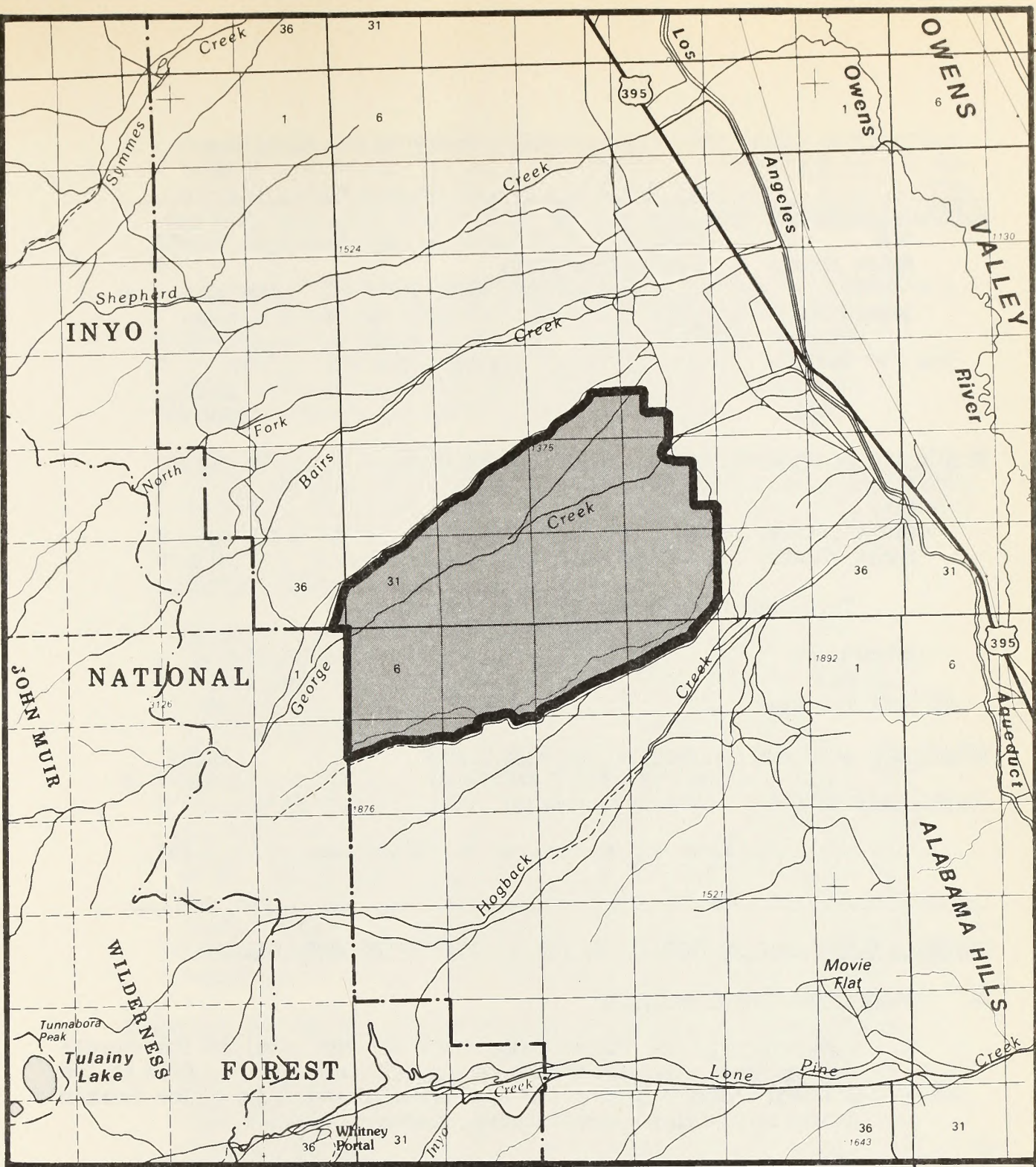
The WSA is recommended non-suitable because it contains marginal wilderness values that lack significant or unique special features. As a result, the

WSA is considered to possess low overall wilderness quality. Manageability was a consideration in the non-suitable recommendation.

Solitude is limited along the eastern boundary due to the outside influence of U.S. Highway 395. This highway is a main transportation corridor between Los Angeles and other points to the north. It is used regularly and lies one to two miles east of the WSA.

The WSA reflects an environment that has little topographic relief and as a result is visually bland. It portrays a landform and vegetation that is generally displayed along the eastern base of the Sierra Nevada. The WSA's vegetative patterns, forms and textures blend together into a monotonous landform. Ribbon-like George Creek provides the major visual contrast in the unit. Although the unit contains the prerequisite wilderness values to qualify as a WSA, it lacks the significant and unique values to enhance or diversify the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS). This low overall wilderness quality was a primary consideration in the non-suitable recommendation.

The WSA's relatively flat topography could make the unit difficult to manage as wilderness. The outside sights and sounds of U.S. Highway 395 and a county maintenance yard are apparent from the eastern edge of the unit. The WSA also lacks easily identifiable boundary features along the eastern boundary as well as a lack of natural barriers to prevent off-highway vehicle use. Vehicles such as four-wheel drives, motorcycles, all-terrain vehicles and mountain bikes can easily go off the boundary roads in this sparsely vegetated WSA. There are approximately eight miles of primitive routes which will remain available for vehicular use.



NONE

RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS

RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS

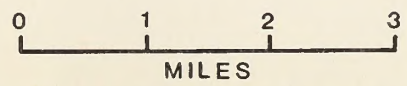
LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS

SPLIT ESTATE

STATE

PRIVATE

**Independence Creek
Proposal
MAP-1**



010-057
JUNE, 1988

TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	6,458
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
Total		<u>6,458</u>
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Study Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<u>0</u>
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	6,458
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>6,458</u>

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The Independence Creek WSA has retained its overall naturalness. The WSA slopes gently eastward from the base of the Eastern Sierra and consists of a broad alluvial fan. The terrain is uniform with numerous shallow washes.

Two distinct vegetation types exist in this WSA. The upper elevation western quarter of the WSA is dominated by Great Basin big sagebrush and bitterbrush. The remaining portion of the WSA is a mixed desert shrub type dominated by blackbrush and goldenbush. George Creek contains succulent riparian zones of willows and waterbirch.

The WSA has been affected by a few man-made imprints. These imprints consist of primitive vehicle routes totaling approximately two miles. The vehicle routes are substantially

unnoticeable because of the dense vegetation extending from the edge of the route. In addition, there is a fenceline in the WSA as well as water-spreading and diversion channels. Overall, the unit's large size makes these improvements imperceptible except on a localized basis.

2. Solitude: The WSA's size contributes to the area's outstanding opportunities for solitude. There is adequate room to roam throughout the WSA without feeling the presence of man's influence. However, outside influences of U.S. Highway 395 and other cultural features are visible from within the WSA, primarily along the WSA's eastern periphery.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and unconfined recreation: The WSA provides opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation. These opportunities include trout fishing, hiking, hunting, camping, and other activities. Visual amenities are minimal due to uniformity of landform character within the WSA.
4. Special features: The unit contains several features of noteworthy significance. It contains George Creek and associated riparian habitat which is an essential micro-environment for local flora and fauna who rely on the water source to exist within the desert ecosystem of Owens Valley. The creek is located in the northern portion of the WSA and contains brown and rainbow trout. In addition, the WSA contains crucial winter habitat for mule deer who rely on this area for forage requirements during the harsh Sierra high-country winters.

B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS)

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 6,458 acres of the Intermountain Sagebrush/Great Basin Sagebrush ecosystem. The Independence Creek WSA would not increase the diversity of the types of ecosystems represented in the NWPS.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush/ Great Basin Sagebrush	1	32,407	55	1,198,817
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush/ Great Basin Sagebrush	0	0	19	214,351

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five-hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of seven major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3 - Wilderness Opportunities for Residents of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
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Las Vegas	46	3,507,293	311	11,186,463
Reno	39	4,647,230	175	6,904,809

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA is within 50 air miles of nine BLM WSAs recommended for wilderness designation. Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Park and the John Muir Wilderness, two and six miles to the west, respectively, are the nearest designated wilderness areas. These wilderness areas are administered by the National Park Service and the Inyo National Forest, respectively. Other nearby designated wilderness areas include the Golden Trout Wilderness and the Ansel Adams Wilderness, which are managed by the Inyo National Forest.

C. Manageability

The Independence Creek WSA is manageable as wilderness, but only with some difficulty. The unit's gently sloping landscape and its sparse vegetation make the WSA very susceptible to indiscriminate off-highway vehicle use. Most of the WSA is vulnerable to vehicle encroachment. Additionally, the outside sights and sounds of U.S. Highway 395, located one to two miles east of the WSA, detract from solitude along the eastern boundary. Finally, the irregular eastern boundary feature makes on-the-ground identification of the unit boundary difficult.

Frequent signing, fencing most of the border, intensive patrolling and providing detailed maps would be required to insure the integrity of the unit.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of information known at the time of the preliminary suitability recommendation: The Independence Creek Wilderness Study Area (WSA) is in the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Alabama Geology-Energy-Minerals (G-E-M) Resource Area (GRA). BLM G-E-M data used in the Affected Environment section of the Benton-Owens Valley Bodie-Coleville Study Areas Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in 1987 indicated that the Independence Creek WSA has low potential for metallic minerals, uranium, thorium, and geothermal resources. The EIS states that there is moderate occurrence potential for non-metallic minerals due to the presence of alluvium on most of the WSA. The EIS stated that non-metallic minerals, such as sand and gravel, have low development potential due to the unknown quality of this material in the WSA and its ample availability outside the WSA. The EIS states that there was no potential for oil and gas in the WSA. The G-E-M report states that gold was produced from a quartz vein in section 11, T. 15 S., R. 35 E., one to two miles from the southern boundary of the WSA and that gold-bearing quartz veins and a zone of hydrothermal alteration exists at the Alabama-Mohawk Mine (sec. 11, T. 35 E., R. 15 S.) one to one and one-half miles from the WSA boundary. The G-E-M report states that there were some placer claims in alluvial deposits in the WSA. There were two inactive mining claims in the northwest corner of the WSA in 1987.
2. Summary of significant new mineral resource data collected since the suitability recommendation which should be considered in the final recommendation: No U.S. Geologic Survey (USGS) or U.S. Bureau of Mines (BOM) mineral surveys were conducted in this WSA. No new data has been generated for this WSA since the EIS of 1987.

E. Impacts on Resources

The following table summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for all alternatives considered including designation or non-designation of the entire area as wilderness. (For a full explanation of this summary, refer to the Benton-Owens Valley/Bodie-Coleville Wilderness - Final Environmental Impact Statement.)

Table 4 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Wilderness Values	There would be only very minor and short-term impacts on the wilderness values of naturalness and solitude in portions of the WSA. A proposed prescribed burn would have a short-term impact on naturalness (1,800 acres) and solitude (3-month period) values. Twenty-five additional cattle would use the denuded area after vegetation had become reestablished, thus slightly affecting naturalness. Maintenance of existing and proposed range facilities as well as existing water-spreading and diversion channels would slightly affect solitude in local areas for short periods of time and impair the perception of naturalness on less than 100 acres.	The net effect of the management actions would be a slight enhancement of long-term protection to wilderness values. Closure of area to motor vehicle use, prohibitions of the proposed prescribed burn, and a decrease in vehicle use associated with maintenance of existing range improvements and existing livestock driveway use would provide some, albeit low, benefits to the area's wilderness values. In addition, long-term security from unanticipated adverse future actions such as mineral exploration and development would be provided.
Motorized Recreation Use	There would be no impact on motorized recreation use which is expected to remain at the current 500 visitor-days per year.	Motorized recreation use totaling 500 visitor-days would be foregone. This would result in only a minor impact as opportunities for motorized recreation use are available on other public lands outside the WSA, and the boundary roads would provide access to those recreation users that wish to continue using the area without vehicles.

Table 4 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative (Cont'd)

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Livestock Grazing and Range Improvements	There would be no impact to livestock grazing and range improvements. All existing operations and proposed projects would be permitted, including a 1,800-acre prescribed burn to increase forage production by 100 AUMs to a total of 653 AUMs.	Prohibiting a proposed 1,800-acre prescribed burn would result in foregoing an opportunity to increase livestock forage by 100 AUMs. Current livestock operations are not dependent upon this increase therefore there would only be a minor impact.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

During the inventory phase, a comment was received which addressed the WSA's potential for ground water recharge facilities.

After the inventory, comments were received during the wilderness study process. Several comments noted that the adjacent USFS RARE II lands add to the WSA's wilderness values. One comment noted that the existing water-spreading and flood channels require maintenance of related roads and trails. One comment noted the scenic values of the WSA, while one comment stated that the WSA did not meet wilderness standards.

During the study phase, a public meeting and public hearing were held in association with the draft EIS. The public meeting was held in Markleeville, California, and the public hearing in Bishop, California. Comments were received both orally through the hearing, and in writing during the 90-day public review period. A total of 83 written and oral comments were received. Forty-one comments supported the Bureau's no-wilderness recommendation. Forty-two comments supported the all-wilderness alternative. No Federal agency comments were received specific to this WSA. The California Department of Fish and Game recommended that vehicle use in the study area be confined to existing roads and trails.

The Inyo County Board of Supervisors has passed a resolution opposing any additional wilderness areas in Inyo County.

Crater Mountain

CA-010-062

CRATER MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CA-010-062)

1. THE STUDY AREA ---

7,551 acres

The Crater Mountain WSA is located in northern Inyo County, approximately two miles south of Big Pine, California. The WSA includes 7,069 acres of BLM land and 482 acres of Inyo National Forest land. There are no State lands or private inholdings in the WSA (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The northern boundary of the WSA follows a road northeast, then heads south along a 750-KV powerline right-of-way. The boundary turns west near Fish Springs Hill and skirts around mining related surface disturbances on the hill's south and east aspects. Near the Fish Springs Hill summit, the boundary turns south and continues for a mile until it meets the Birch Creek road. The boundary follows this road west and intersects the McMurray Meadows Road. The boundary then proceeds north on this road and around private land until it meets the WSA's northern boundary road.

The WSA straddles the common edges of the Basin and Range and the Sierra Nevada geomorphic provinces. The WSA is located on Owens Valley alluvial deposition at the eastern base of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. The primary landform feature of the WSA is Crater Mountain - a volcanic cone and associated basaltic lava flows. Elevation in the unit ranges from 4,200 feet to 6,055 feet. Topographical relief is fairly uniform around the volcano. The summit of Crater Mountain reaches an elevation exceeding 6,000 feet. The southwest portion of the WSA consists of sedimentary outwash from the Sierra Nevada mountain range. Several ephemeral drainages incise this portion of the unit. The WSA is uniformly blanketed with mixed desert shrubs below the volcanic cinder cone. Plant density is low to moderate.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Various suitability recommendations were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) for the Benton-Owens Valley/Bodie-Coleville Wilderness Study Areas. A summary of the area's wilderness values was included in the Final EIS. Three different suitability recommendations were analyzed in the EISs: all wilderness, partial wilderness recommending 85% of the area suitable, and no wilderness.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE ---

0	acres recommended for wilderness
7,551	BLM acres recommended for nonwilderness

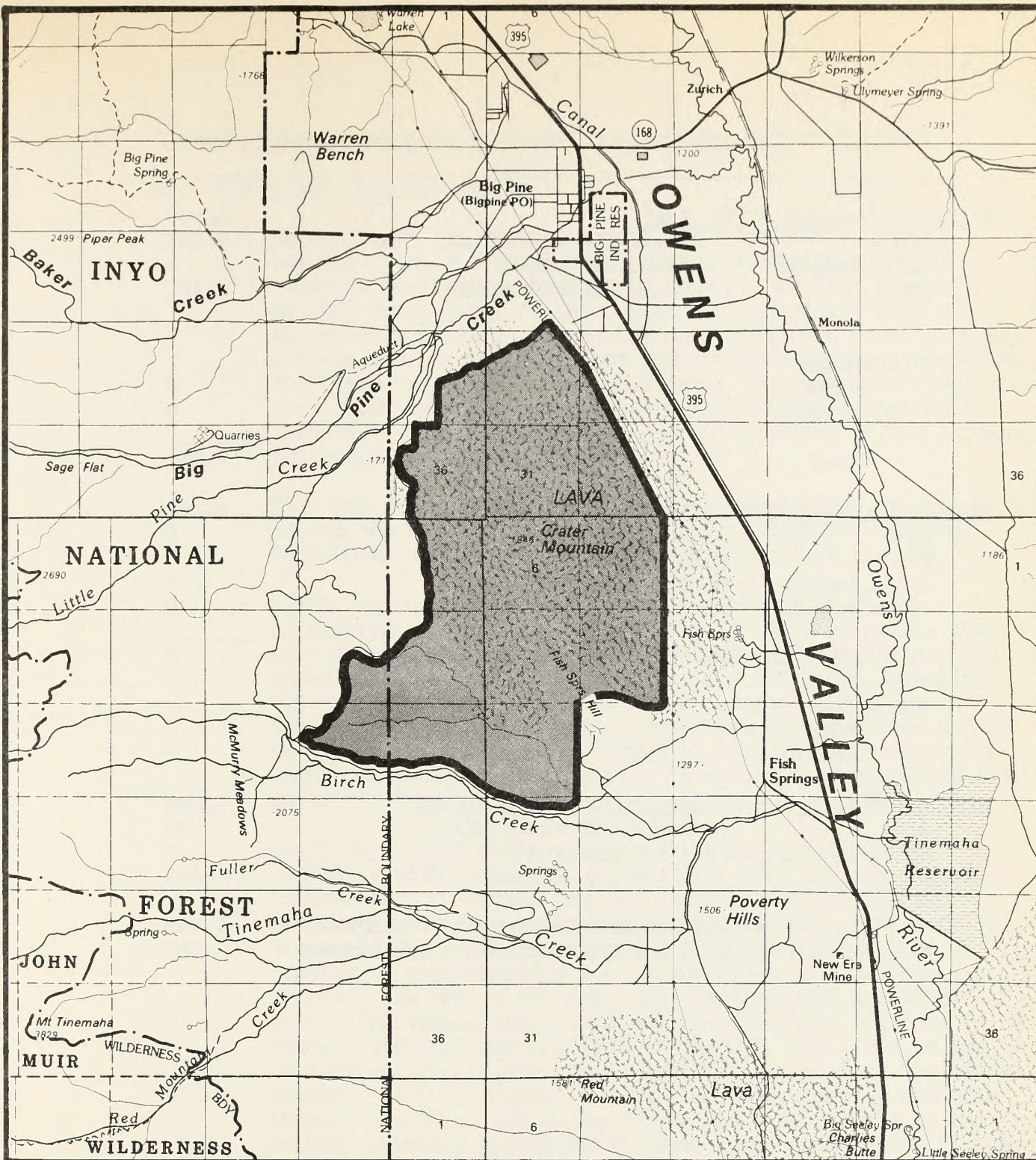
No wilderness is the recommendation for this WSA. The entire acreage in this WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. The all-wilderness alternative is considered to be the environmentally-preferred alternative as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The no-wilderness alternative will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The WSA is recommended non-suitable because its potential for mineral occurrence outweighs the area's wilderness values. In addition, manageability was a strong consideration in the non-suitable recommendation.

Resource conflicts in the WSA include moderate potential for geothermal resources throughout the WSA. Additionally, the southeast portion of the WSA is considered to have a moderate potential for gold. The area has recently been determined to also contain moderate potential for silver and copper. Thirty-eight unpatented mining claims are located in this area. There is a low to moderate probability that mining claims in this area would result in valid existing rights. Development of mining claims which are found to have valid existing rights could impair the area's wilderness values with or without wilderness designation.

A primary manageability problem which contributed to the non-suitable recommendation is the unit's physiographic landform and lack of vegetative screening which limit outstanding opportunities for solitude in major portions of the WSA. Additionally, the potential determination of valid existing rights related to mining claims in the WSA may further hinder manageability.

There are approximately four miles of primitive ways which will remain available for vehicular use in the WSA.

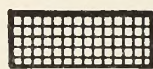


NONE

RECOMMENDED FOR
WILDERNESS



RECOMMENDED FOR
NONWILDERNESS



LAND OUTSIDE WSA
RECOMMENDED FOR
WILDERNESS



SPLIT ESTATE

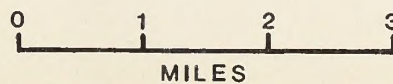


STATE



PRIVATE

**Crater Mountain
Proposal
MAP-1**



010-062
JUNE, 1988

TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	7,069
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
USFS	(surface and subsurface)	482
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
Total		<hr/> 7,551
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Study Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<hr/> 0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	7,069
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
USFS	(surface and subsurface) ¹	482
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<hr/> 7,069
Total USFS Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		482

¹The USFS has agreed to allow these lands, located in the Inyo National Forest, to be reported as part of BLM's WSR. When Congress acts, the lands will be managed in accordance with the current approved management plan.

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The Crater Mountain WSA generally appears natural. The WSA consists of Crater Mountain, a large volcanic mountain surrounded by rough black lava flows. Lack of soil development on the crater and associated lava flows has greatly limited the vegetation, creating a stark contrast between the volcanic landform and its surroundings, including the Owens Valley and the High Sierra. The mountain rises more than 2,000 feet above the Owens Valley floor - reaching an elevation of 6,055 feet. It is considered one of the largest volcanoes in the region.

This WSA supports a uniform composition of mixed desert shrubs around the base of the cinder cone. Goldenbush, ephedra, buckwheat, and desert needlegrass are found in the WSA.

A few man-made features do exist in the unit but are considered visually insignificant amid the lava rubble that pervades the WSA. These features include approximately four miles of primitive vehicle routes, a drift fence, pipeline, earth-tone painted livestock water troughs, and isolated inactive mining claims. The rugged volcanic features of the crater and associated lava flows in the WSA discourage most forms of development activity. An electric transmission line parallels the eastern boundary just outside the WSA.

2. Solitude: Outstanding opportunities for solitude are available within the WSA. The unit's size and its jagged, boulder-strewn terrain provide a screening effect which enhances one's opportunity to find isolation. Additionally, the small caves and lava tubes in the WSA provide some additional opportunities for sub-terranean seclusion. However, the unit's rounded, open landform and a lack of sufficient vegetation limits opportunities for solitude in the eastern and northern portions of the WSA. Solitude in the eastern portion of the WSA is somewhat degraded by the visual presence of U.S. Highway 395 located approximately one mile outside the WSA. The community of Big Pine as well as the eastern boundary transmission power line can be seen from the northern and eastern portions of the WSA.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and unconfined recreation: The WSA provides several opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation. These opportunities include hiking, hunting, photography, historical sightseeing and appreciation, geological sightseeing, horseback riding, and others. Spelunkers periodically visit several caves and lava tubes in the WSA. The WSA is a very popular chukar hunting area with valley residents. Local school field trips are commonly held in the WSA. In addition, the area provides opportunities for scientific and Native American research activities.
4. Special features: The Crater Mountain cinder cone and lava flows are the dominant and most significant features of the WSA. They lend a high scenic quality, as well as intriguing geological values to the WSA. Additional features of special interest include cultural resource values, such as temporary hunting camps, petroglyphs, seed collecting and processing sites; and crucial winter habitat for the Goodale mule deer herd, which relies on this habitat for forage requirements during the harsh Sierra high-country winters.

B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS)

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 7,551 acres of the Intermountain Sagebrush/Great Basin Sagebrush ecosystem. The Crater Mountain WSA would not increase the diversity of the types of ecosystems represented in the NWPS.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BIM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush/ Great Basin Sagebrush	1	32,407	55	1,198,207
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush/ Great Basin Sagebrush	0	0	19	213,741

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of seven major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BIM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3 - Wilderness Opportunities for Residents of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>California</u>				
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,515
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Los Angeles-Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
Oxnard-Ventura	23	2,195,198	85	2,703,260
Riverside-San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
<u>Nevada</u>				
Las Vegas	46	3,507,293	311	11,186,463
Reno	39	4,647,230	175	6,904,809

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas:
The WSA is within 50 air miles of six BLM WSAs recommended for wilderness designation. Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Park and the John Muir Wilderness, seven and 13 miles to the west, respectively, are the nearest designated wilderness areas. These wilderness areas are administered by the National Park Service (NPS) and the Inyo National Forest, respectively. Other nearby non-Bureau wilderness areas include the Golden Trout Wilderness and the Ansel Adams Wilderness which are managed by the Inyo National Forest.

C. Manageability

The Crater Mountain WSA would be difficult to manage as wilderness, and under certain circumstances, unmanageable. Although natural and cultural features are available for effective boundary management, the outside sights and sounds of Big Pine, a 750-kV powerline and Highway 395 would limit effective management of the area as wilderness. The rounded, open landform and a lack of vegetative screening leaves opportunities for solitude vulnerable to adjacent sights.

Although the probability is low to moderate, a determination of valid existing mineral development rights in the southeast portion of the WSA may completely impede effective wilderness management in this section. Wilderness values of naturalness, solitude, and opportunities for primitive recreation experience could be permanently impaired if this area was actively mined.

Some signing and fencing would be required in portions of the unit to protect its integrity. Periodic patrols would also be required.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of information known at the time of the preliminary suitability recommendation: The Crater Mountain WSA is within the BLM Big Pine Geology-Energy-Minerals (G-E-M) Resource Area (GRA). The G-E-M data in the Affected Environment section of the 1987 BLM Wilderness Recommendations, Benton-Owens Valley-Bodie-Coleville Study Areas, Final EIS indicates that the WSA has a moderate potential for the occurrence of gold and geothermal resources; a low occurrence potential for non-metallic minerals, uranium, thorium and metallic minerals other than gold; and no potential for oil and gas. The moderate potential for gold was identified in a small area in the southern portion of the WSA. As of the spring 1986, 59 unpatented mining claims were located within the WSA, according to BLM records. Ten of these were millsites, 25 were lode claims and 24 were placer claims. In the northern portion of the WSA there were six mill sites. There were 25 lode, 24 placer, and four mill site claims for a total of 53 claims in the southern part of the WSA.

The G-E-M report for the Crater Mountain GRA does not specifically analyze the area near the Crater Mountain WSA. However, it discusses the area in general terms. Supplementary G-E-M data collected by BLM prior to the suitability recommendation supports the EIS (BLM Internal Report, Dec. 1983, "Analysis of Management Situation," WSA file #CA-010-062).

Crater Mountain is composed primarily of Pleistocene basalt and cinders intruding and overlying a Cretaceous granitic pluton. The WSA is highly faulted, with major faults trending in a northwest direction, parallel to the general trend of Owens Valley. Granitic rocks crop out through the overlying Pleistocene volcanics in several places, but most prominently along the southeastern boundary of the WSA. This outcrop of granite is the area of moderate potential for the occurrence of gold. Fifty-three unpatented mining claims are located in this area. This area has been mined in the past at the Cleveland Mine and the Cometti Mine (sections 7, 17, and 18, T. 10 S., R. 34 E., MDM). The earliest documentation of this deposit is in 1893. The deposit was mined intermittently until 1949. Total production is reported to be 2,677 ounces of gold, 2,000 ounces of silver and 1,551 ounces of copper (BLM, URA 3 for Owen's Valley, updated 1988).

The deposit is described as free gold in a series of narrow, nearly parallel quartz veins in Cretaceous granite. Free gold occurs with pyrite and chalcopyrite.

Sorted ore carried three to 11 ounces of gold per ton. The granite host rock extends into sections 7, 8, 17, and 18. This area, therefore, was rated as having moderate potential for gold, silver and copper.

The entire WSA was rated as having a moderate potential for geothermal resources. This rating is based on the following three factors: the existence of surface hot springs in the vicinity; the presence of youthful Pleistocene volcanic centers indicative of magmatic heat at shallow depths; and the fractured nature of the terrain which could allow for migration and convection of hydrothermal fluids.

2. Summary of significant new mineral data collected since the suitability recommendation which should be considered in the final decision: Because this WSA was recommended non-suitable by BLM, no U.S. Geological Survey or U.S. Bureau of Mines mineral surveys were conducted. Personal communication with the present claimant (Mr. King Ives) of the Cometti Mine has revealed the following: He is currently evaluating the old workings in section 17. He has an assay from a three-foot-long channel sample across the face of one of the underground drifts, which ran approximately three ounces of gold per ton. The veins run roughly east-west with variable dips. A cyanide separation gold mill was in operation at the Cleveland Mine approximately 15 years ago.

BLM records dated May 4, 1988, show that 38 mining claims continue to exist in the WSA. No mineral leases or mineral material sales contracts/ permits were identified. The distribution of unpatented mining claims is summarized in the table below:

Table 4 - Mining Claims

TYPE	NO.			ACRES		
	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL
Mining Claims						
Lode	0	17	17	0	340	340
Placer	0	20	20	0	800	800
Mill Sites	0	1	1	0	5	5
Total	0	38	38	0	1,145	1,145

E. Impacts on Resources

The following table summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for all alternatives considered including designation or non-designation of the entire area as wilderness. (For a full explanation of this summary, refer to the Benton-Owens Valley/Bodie-Coleville Wilderness - Final Environmental Impact Statement.)

Table 5 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	PARTIAL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Wilderness Values	<p>The primary impacts to wilderness values would originate from mining activities in the southeast portion of the WSA associated with development of an underground gold mine. These impacts would result in the loss of naturalness on 90 acres, and the perception of naturalness and sense of solitude would be impaired on approximately 1,200 acres.</p> <p>Impacts from continued motorized recreation use, livestock operations and maintenance of existing livestock facilities, as well as construction and maintenance of a proposed chukar water facility would generally be localized and insignificant due to the infrequent nature of these activities and low level of use.</p> <p>Impacts to wilderness values would predominantly only occur in the southern portion of the WSA and not affect the majority of the 7,551 acres within the WSA.</p>	<p>Wilderness designation would result in low positive benefits to all-wilderness values throughout the WSA, particularly in the southwest portion of the WSA due to the elimination of 675 visitor days of motorized recreation use.</p> <p>Should valid existing rights not be proven, mining activities would be precluded. Wilderness values would be retained on 90 acres and within 1,200 acres in which the perception of naturalness and the sense of solitude would not be impaired due to mining. However, should mining claims in the southeast portion of the WSA prove valid, existing rights, mining activity would result in a loss of naturalness on 90 acres and impair the perception of naturalness and the sense of solitude on 1,200 acres.</p> <p>Impacts resulting from livestock operations and construction and maintenance of</p>	<p>Wilderness designation would result in a low positive benefit to all-wilderness values within the 6,418 acres designated wilderness, particularly in the southwest portion of the WSA due to the elimination of 600 visitor days of motorized recreation.</p> <p>Mining activity in the southeast portion of the WSA not designated wilderness would result in a loss of naturalness on 90 acres and the perception of naturalness and sense of solitude impaired on 1,200 acres.</p> <p>Impacts resulting from livestock operations and construction and maintenance would generally be localized and insignificant as described under the All Wilderness Alternative.</p>

Table 5 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative (Cont'd)

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	PARTIAL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Wilderness Values (continued)		a chukar water facility would generally be localized and insignificant with negligible benefits as a result of restricting three vehicle trips per year.	
Motorized Recreation Use	There would be no impact on motorized recreation use. The entire WSA would remain open for motorized recreation use with the current 675 visitor-days expected to remain stable.	There would be only minor impacts on motorized recreation use. Closure of the WSA would result in 675 visitor-days of motorized recreation use foregone.	There would be only minor impacts on motorized recreation use. Approximately 600 visitor-days of motorized recreation use would be foregone.
Mineral Development	There would be no impact on mineral development. The entire WSA would remain open to mineral entry. However, the only potential development anticipated would be an underground gold mine in the southern portion of the WSA.	There would be only a minor impact on mineral development as a result of wilderness designation. Opportunities to explore and develop the WSA's generally low potential for mineral resources would be foregone. Should discovery occur within an area of moderate mineral potential in the southern portion of the WSA, a determination of valid existing rights would most likely result in development.	There would be only minor impacts on mineral development. Exploration and development of mineral resources could occur within the non-wilderness portion of the WSA particularly in an area of moderate potential. In the designated portion, no anticipated development of minerals would be foregone due to the low mineral potential.
Cultural Resources	There is a potential for adverse impacts to cultural resources within the WSA however these impacts would be avoided or minimized through monitoring, protection efforts and mitigation measures for projected mining activities.	There would be a positive benefit to cultural resources as a result of wilderness designation. The threat of impact-causing activities such as mining and continued motorized recreation use would be eliminated or reduced.	There would be a positive benefit to cultural resources as a result of wilderness designation of 6,418 acres within the WSA. There would not likely be any impacts to cultural resources on the 1,133 acres not designated due to the lack of predicted values.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

During the inventory phase, a few comments were received pertaining to the area's mineral values, wildlife values, and transmission-line corridor expansion opportunities.

After the inventory, comments were received during the wilderness study process. A few comments were received which pertained to influences from outside sights and sounds, access needs, and mineral values. A few individuals wish to see the WSA permanently protected; one of these individuals noted the area's scenic values. One comment noted the area's geological values.

During the study phase, a public meeting and public hearing were held in association with the draft EIS for the WSAs within the EIS area. The public meeting was held in Markleeville, California, and the public hearing in Bishop, California. Comments were received both orally through the hearing, and in writing during the 90-day public review period. A total of 83 written and oral comments were received. Thirty-four comments supported the Bureau's no-wilderness recommendation. Forty-two comments supported the all-wilderness alternative. Seven comments supported the partial-wilderness alternative.

No Federal or State agency comments were received specific to this WSA.

The Inyo County Board of Supervisors has passed a resolution opposing any additional wilderness areas in Inyo County.

Symmes Creek

CA-010-064

SYMME CREEK WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CA-010-064)

1. THE STUDY AREA ---

8,717 acres

The Symmes Creek WSA is located in the northern half of Inyo County, approximately two miles south of Independence, California. The WSA includes 7,694 acres of BLM lands, 383 acres of Inyo National Forest lands (USFS), 640 acres of private inholdings, and no State land (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The northern boundary of the WSA follows a graded dirt road to the east, then heads south along an irregular boundary of private land. The WSA boundary turns west along Shepherd Creek and proceeds one and one-quarter miles where it jogs south until it meets a maintained dirt road south of Shepherd Creek. The boundary continues west along this road until it intersects Foothill Road. The boundary proceeds north along Foothill Road until it intersects the graded dirt road which serves as the WSA's northern boundary.

The WSA lies in the transition zone of the Basin and Range and the Sierra Nevada geomorphic provinces. Composed of sedimentary outwash from the Sierra Nevada mountain range, the WSA consists of a broad, rocky alluvial apron at the eastern base of the Sierra. The WSA gently slopes downward to the east. Elevation ranges from 4,000 feet to 5,600 feet. Topographical relief is generally uniform, providing little variation in the landscape. Shallow dry washes are scattered throughout the unit. The northern and southern portions of the unit are traversed by two perennial creeks -- Symmes Creek and Shepherd Creek. The unit is uniformly composed of mixed desert shrubs. In 1985, a wildfire burned most of the vegetation in almost one-half of the WSA. For a few years, vegetation had not reestablished in the WSA. However, vegetation slowly has reestablished in areas burned by the wildfire.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Various suitability recommendations were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) for the Benton-Owens Valley/Bodie-Coleville Wilderness Study Areas. A summary of the area's wilderness values was included in the Final EIS. Two different suitability recommendations were analyzed in the EISs: all wilderness and no wilderness.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE ---

0	acres recommended for wilderness
8,077	BLM & USFS acres recommended for nonwilderness

No wilderness is the recommendation for this WSA. The entire acreage in this WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. The all-wilderness alternative is considered to be the environmentally-preferred alternative as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The no-wilderness alternative will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

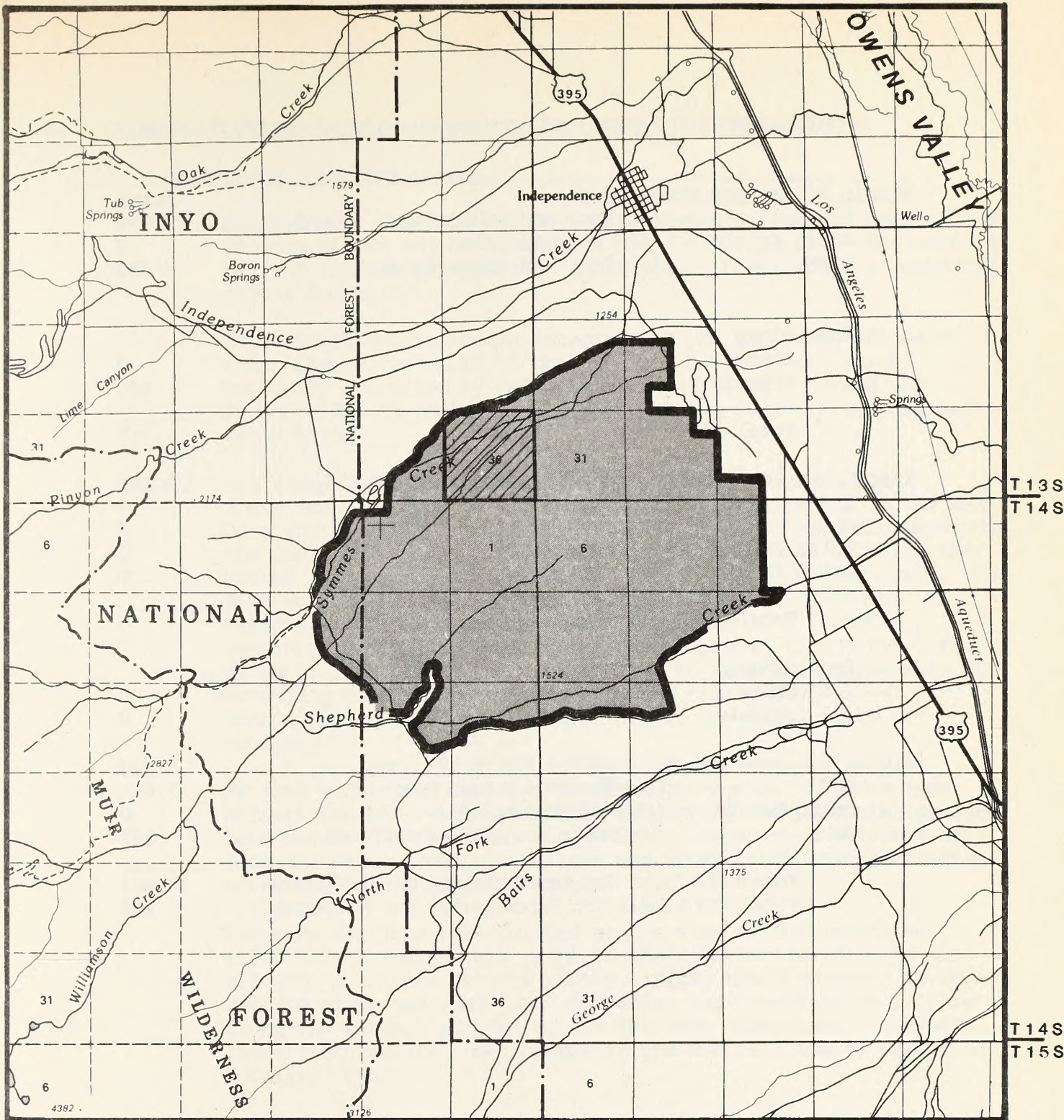
The WSA is recommended non-suitable because it contains marginal wilderness values that lack significant or unique special features. As a result, the WSA is considered to possess a low overall wilderness quality. The need for apiary site operations also outweigh the area's low wilderness values. Finally, manageability was a tertiary consideration in the non-suitable recommendation.

Solitude is limited along the eastern boundary which is approximately one-half mile from U.S. Highway 395. The highway is a main transportation link between Los Angeles and other points north. The WSA reflects an environment that has little topographic relief and as a result is visually bland. It portrays a landform and vegetation that is generally displayed along the eastern base of the Sierra Nevada. The WSA's vegetative patterns, forms and textures blend together into a monotonous landform cover. The ribbon-like creeks provide the major visual contrast in the unit. Although the unit contains the prerequisite wilderness values to qualify as a WSA, it lacks the significant and unique values to enhance or diversify the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS). This overall wilderness quality was a primary consideration in the nonsuitable recommendation.

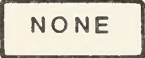


Three apiary sites are located in the southern portion of the WSA. Each site occupies approximately one-quarter acre. Due to spatial requirements which maintain bee colony stability, few opportunities are available to relocate these sites elsewhere.


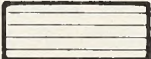

The WSA's relatively flat topography makes the unit somewhat difficult to manage as wilderness. The outside sights and sounds of U.S. Highway 395 are apparent from the eastern edge of the unit and the irregular eastern boundary feature also limits manageability.

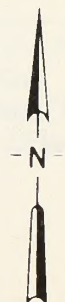
There are approximately ten miles of primitive ways which will remain available for vehicular use.



R34E R35E

- | | | |
|---|---|----------------------------|
|  | NONE | RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS | |
|  | LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS | |

- | | |
|---|--------------|
|  | SPLIT ESTATE |
|  | STATE |
|  | PRIVATE |



**Symmes Creek
Proposal
MAP-1**

0 1 2 3
MILES

010-064
JUNE, 1988

TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	7,694
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
USFS	(surface and subsurface)	383
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		640
Total		<u>8,717</u>
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Study Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<u>0</u>
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	7,694
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
USFS	(USFS surface and subsurface) ¹	383
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>7,694</u>
Total USFS Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		383

¹The USFS has agreed to allow these lands, located in the Inyo National Forest, to be reported as part of the BLM WSR. When Congress acts, the lands will be managed in accordance with the current approved management plan.

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The WSA slopes gently eastward from the base of the Eastern Sierra and consists of a broad alluvial fan. The western half of the WSA is typically dominated by blackbrush, a vegetative climax community.

Bitterbrush and sagebrush integrate at the upper elevations of the WSA. The eastern half of the WSA is a mixed desert shrub community dominated by goldenbush and saltbush. Symmes and Shepherd Creeks contain succulent riparian zones of willows and water birch.

The Symmes Creek WSA contains some evidence of man's works. These man-made impacts are substantially unnoticeable in the WSA as a whole. However, the biggest alteration to naturalness since the designation of the WSA in 1979 was the intense wildfire that burned 3,520 acres of the WSA, primarily in the western half. The fire was caused by a lightning strike which was fanned by extremely high and erratic winds. This resulted in total destruction of all plants in the fire's path. In addition, five miles of fire breaks were constructed to keep the raging fire from spreading to adjacent private land and nearby residences. Rehabilitation was not conducted due to low probability of success.

By 1988 vegetation was reestablished throughout the burn area. Bitterbrush has resprouted while new shrubs and perennial grasses have moved into the area. The shallow washes show evidence of wind and water erosion. Willows and water birch have resprouted along Symmes and Shepherd Creeks.

Man-made imprints that existed at the time of the intensive wilderness inventory and prior to the fire include five to six miles of primitive vehicle routes. After the inventory, three beehive sites and some water-spreading and diversion facilities along the eastern portion of the WSA were discovered. Overall, these features are unnoticeable in the WSA as a whole, except on a localized basis.

2. Solitude: The area provides outstanding opportunities for solitude due to the unit's size. Although the burning of all vegetation in the western half of the WSA has limited these opportunities, this charred and barren landscape imparts an eerie feeling of desolation to area visitors. As natural rehabilitation continues, the landscape will return to a natural appearance and reduce this heightened sense of solitude. The influences of U.S. Highway 395, located one-half mile east of the WSA, and a cherrystem intrusion in the southwest corner of the WSA somewhat degrade opportunities for solitude.

This WSA is overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission during approved military operations. The visual intrusions and associated noise create temporary effects on solitude which are deemed acceptable and necessary as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and unconfined recreation: The WSA provides opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation. These opportunities include trout fishing in Symmes and Shepherd Creeks, hunting, camping, and other activities. Visual amenities are low due to uniformity of landform character within the WSA.
4. Special features: The unit contains several features of noteworthy significance. It contains Symmes and Shepherd Creeks and associated riparian habitats which are a necessary micro-environment for local flora and fauna who rely on this water source to survive the harsh desert environment of Owens Valley. These two creeks contain brown and rainbow trout, and provide riparian habitat. In addition, the western one-half of the WSA is crucial winter habitat for mule deer that rely on this habitat for forage requirements during the harsh Sierra high-country winters.

B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS)

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 8,077 acres of the Intermountain Sagebrush/Great Basin Sagebrush ecosystem. The Symmes Creek WSA would not increase the diversity of the types of ecosystems represented in the NWPS.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BIM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush/ Great Basin Sagebrush	1	32,407	55	1,196,941
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush/ Great Basin Sagebrush	0	0	19	212,475

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of seven major

population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3 - Wilderness Opportunities for Residents of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>California</u>				
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,515
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Los Angeles-Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
Oxnard-Ventura	23	2,195,198	85	2,703,260
Riverside-San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
<u>Nevada</u>				
Las Vegas	46	3,507,293	311	11,186,463
Reno	39	4,647,230	175	6,904,809

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA is within 50 air miles of eight BLM WSAs recommended for wilderness designation. Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Park and the John Muir Wilderness, three and six miles to the west, respectively, are the nearest designated wilderness areas. These wilderness areas are administered by the National Park Service and the Inyo National Forest, respectively. Other nearby designated wilderness areas include the Golden Trout Wilderness and the Ansel Adams Wilderness which are managed by the Inyo National Forest.

C. Manageability

The Symmes Creek WSA is manageable as wilderness, but only with some difficulty. The unit's gently sloping landscape and its sparse vegetation make the WSA very susceptible to indiscriminate off-road vehicle use. Most of the WSA is vulnerable to vehicle encroachment. Additionally, the outside sights and sounds of U.S. Highway 395, located one-half mile east of the WSA, detracts from solitude along the eastern boundary. Finally, the irregular eastern boundary feature makes on-the-ground identification of the unit boundary difficult.

Frequent signing, fencing of most of the border, intensive patrolling and providing detailed maps would be required to insure the integrity of the unit.

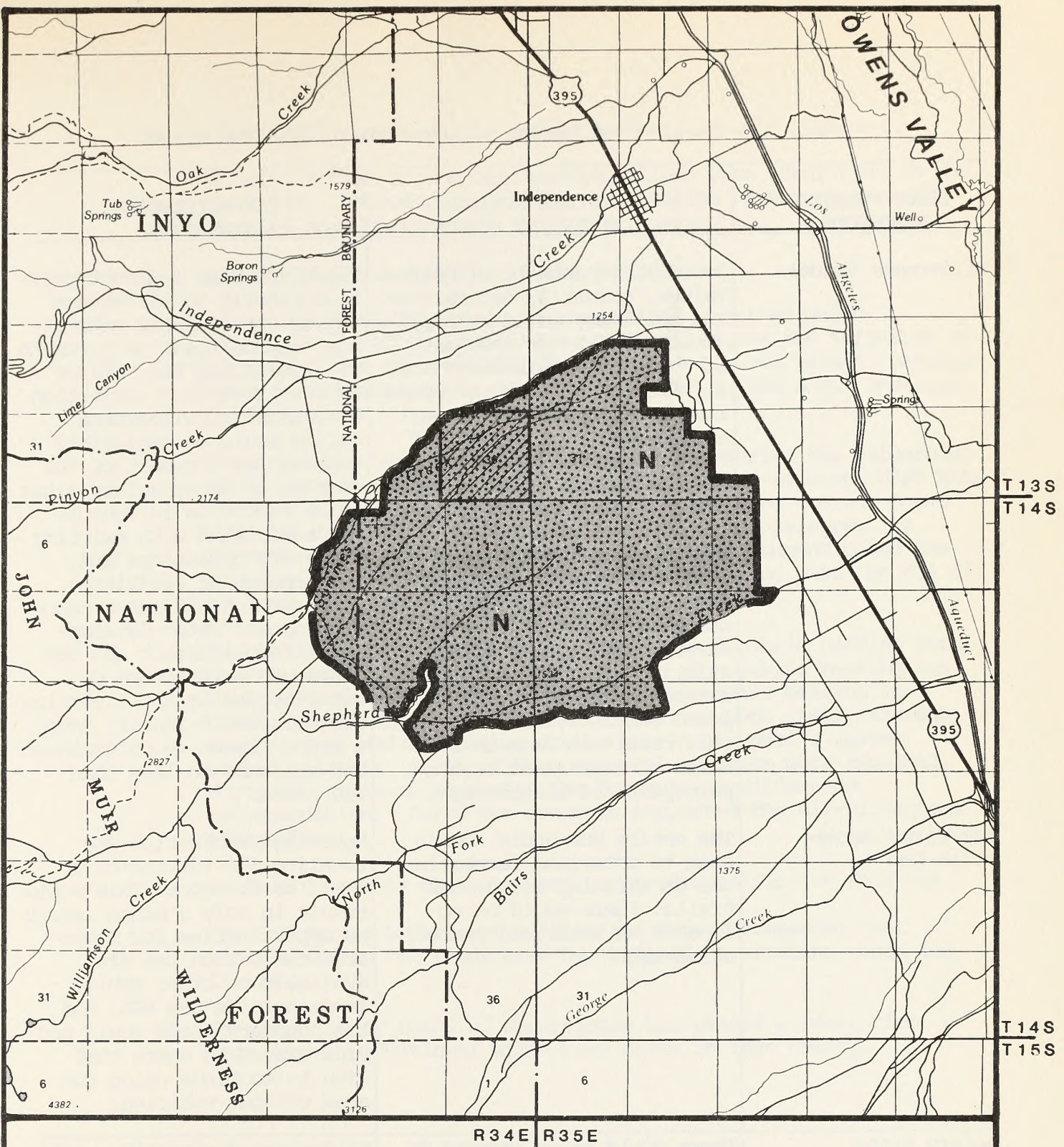
Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of information known at the time of the preliminary suitability recommendation: The Symmes Creek Wilderness Study Area (WSA) is in the BIM Alabama Geology - Energy - Minerals (GEM) Resource Area (GRA). BIM GEM data in the Affected Environment section of the Benton-Owens Valley Bodie-Coleville Study Areas EIS (1987), indicated that the Symmes Creek WSA had low potential for metallic minerals, uranium, thorium, and geothermal. There is moderate potential for nonmetallic minerals. Although rated as having moderate potential, non-metallics such as sand and gravel are considered to have low development potential due to the unknown quality of this material and its ample availability outside the WSA. There is no potential for oil and gas in the WSA. There are no known unpatented mining claims in the WSA. There are no mineral leases in the WSA.
2. Summary of significant new mineral data collected since the suitability recommendation which should be considered in the final decision: No new data has been generated since the EIS of 1987.

E. Impacts on Resources

The following table summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for all alternatives considered including designation or non-designation of the entire area as wilderness. (For a full explanation of this summary, refer to the Benton-Owens Valley/Bodie-Coleville Wilderness - Final Environmental Impact Statement.)



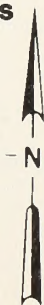
- | | |
|------|---|
| NONE | Recommended for Wilderness |
| | Recommended for Non Wilderness |
| | Land outside WSA Recommended for Wilderness |
| | Split Estate |
| | State |
| | Private |

Explanation

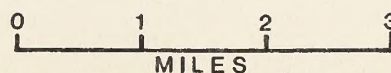
- | | |
|---|--|
| | High Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals |
| | Moderate Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals |
| M | Moderate Mineral Potential Location in a High Mineral Potential Area |
| H | High Mineral Potential Location in a Moderate Mineral Potential Area |

Commodity Symbols

N Non-metallic



**Symmes Creek
Mineral Resource Potential**



**Map-2
010-064**

Table 4 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Wilderness Values	Overall, impacts to wilderness values, primarily naturalness and solitude, would be negligible and for the most part, short-term. Construction and maintenance of three proposed livestock facilities as well as the repair or removal of fish structures would insignificantly add to the existing low levels of impact from motorized recreation use and vehicle use for livestock operations and maintenance of water-spreading and diversion channels. The continued existence of apiary sites, existing water-spreading and diversion channels, and proposed water developments would only result in less than 170 acres of impairment of the perception of naturalness.	There would be a slight positive benefit to wilderness values particularly naturalness and solitude as a result of eliminating 500 visitor days of motorized recreation use. Locally, wilderness values would be negligibly improved as a result of the removal of three apiary sites and a reduction in vehicle use associated with existing livestock operations and maintenance of facilities. Construction and maintenance of proposed water developments for livestock and the continued maintenance of water-spreading and diversion channels would locally have a minor impact on naturalness and solitude on less than 110 acres.
Motorized Recreation Use	The entire WSA would remain open to motorized recreation use on existing routes and trails. There would be no impacts on motorized recreation use.	Motorized recreation use totaling 500 visitor-days would be foregone. This would result in only a minor impact as opportunities for motorized recreation use are available on other public lands outside the WSA, and the boundary roads would provide access to users that wish to continue using the area without vehicles.
Apiary Sites	There would be no impacts on apiary sites within the WSA. Beekeeping operations would be permitted at three existing apiary sites.	Wilderness designation would eliminate three apiary sites from the WSA. There would be an adverse impact on beekeeping operations due to the lack of suitable relocation sites.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

During the inventory phase, a comment was received which addressed the WSA's potential mineral values and the influence of outside sights and sounds on the WSA's wilderness values. Another comment indicated the area's potential for ground water recharge facilities.

After the inventory, comments were received during the wilderness study process. Several comments noted that the adjacent USFS RARE II lands add to the WSA's wilderness values. One comment noted that the existing water-spreading and flood channels require maintenance of related roads and trails. One comment noted the scenic values of the WSA while one comment stated that the WSA did not meet wilderness standards.

During the study phase, a public meeting and public hearing were held in association with the draft EIS. The public meeting was held in Markleeville, California, and the public hearing in Bishop, California. Comments were received both orally through the hearing, and in writing during the 90-day public review period. A total of 83 written and oral comments were received. Forty-one comments supported the Bureau's no-wilderness recommendation. Forty-two comments supported the all-wilderness alternative.

No Federal agency comments were received specific for this WSA.

The California Department of Fish and Game recommended that vehicle use in the study area be confined to existing roads and trails.

The Inyo County Board of Supervisors has passed a resolution opposing any additional wilderness areas in Inyo County.

Chidago Canyon

CA-010-079

CHIDAGO CANYON WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CA-010-079)

1. THE STUDY AREA — 20,365 acres

The Chidago Canyon WSA is located in southern Mono County, approximately 12 miles north of Bishop, California. The WSA includes 19,702 acres of BLM land, 663 acres of State land and no private inholdings (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The northern boundary of the WSA follows Red Rock Canyon County Road to the east, then heads south along Fish Slough Road. The boundary turns west along an improved ranching road until it meets a 750-KV powerline right-of-way. The western boundary proceeds north along the right-of-way until it intersects Red Rock Canyon Road.

The WSA is situated in the western margin of the Basin and Range geomorphic province and lies entirely within the central portion of the Volcanic Tableland, a geological product of cinder and hot gas eruptions from vents in Long Valley which occurred 700,000 years ago. This unique landscape is generally characterized as a series of overlying rhyolitic ash deposits which culminate in a rolling tableland terrain feature. The WSA gently slopes downward to the east. Elevation ranges from 4,400 feet to 6,000 feet. Chidago Canyon incises the area up to several hundred feet deep and runs in a south-easterly direction near the southern border. Volcanic terraces, rounded hills, en echelon scarps (a series of parallel scarps formed by faulting activity), and Chidago Canyon contribute to the scenic and landform variety of the WSA. The vegetation, which is uniformly distributed throughout, consists mostly of Great Basin shrubs.

The eastern half of the WSA is part of the Fish Slough Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). The ACEC management plan prescribes protection of the aquifer recharge source within the WSA in order to maintain the wetland habitat, which lies outside, and adjacent to the WSA.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Various suitability recommendations were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) for the Benton-Owens Valley/Bodie-Coleville Wilderness Study Areas. A summary of the area's wilderness values was included in the Final EIS. Three different suitability recommendations were analyzed in the EIS: all wilderness, partial wilderness recommending approximately 41% of the area suitable, and no wilderness.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE ---

0 acres recommended
for wilderness
19,702 BIM acres recommended for
nonwilderness

No wilderness is the recommendation for this WSA. The entire acreage in this WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. The all wilderness alternative is considered to be the environmentally preferred alternative as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The no-wilderness alternative will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The WSA is recommended non-suitable because its potential for mineral occurrence, motorized recreation, and future transmission line expansion needs outweigh the area's wilderness values. In addition, manageability was a strong consideration in the non-suitable recommendation.

Solitude can be disrupted visually and by noise during winter months from local motorized recreation activity. This use occurs primarily on weekends and on existing routes. Additionally, man-made visual influences outside the WSA such as, a 750 kV electric transmission line along the western boundary and periodic vehicle use on the eastern boundary road, affect solitude along the WSA's borders. Some portions of the WSA allow unobstructed views of the transmission line up to a distance of one and one-half mile.

Resource conflicts in the WSA include moderate potential for metallic minerals in the WSA's western quarter, moderate potential for nonmetallic minerals in the eastern two-thirds of the WSA and moderate potential for geothermal resources throughout the WSA. There is current interest in the area to quarry decorative building stone known as Bishop tuff. Development of mining claims which are found to have valid existing rights could impair the area's wilderness values with or without wilderness designation.

The Benton-Owens Valley Management Framework Plan prescribes a half-mile wide utility line corridor along four and one-half miles of the western boundary. This corridor lies within the WSA one-quarter mile east of the present transmission line boundary. There is a high current demand for use of this corridor. Most recently, Oxbow Geothermal Corporation has demonstrated a need to utilize this corridor for construction of an electric transmission line. Additionally, several utility/energy organizations have expressed support to accommodate future use in this corridor.

The WSA provides suitable opportunities for motorized recreational use. Approximately 25 miles of primitive vehicle routes are located in the WSA. Most of these routes are located north of Chidago Canyon. In addition, there are 11 miles of trail systems in the WSA, used primarily by motorcyclists and horseback riders. The motorcycle use occurs in this snow-free area from November to April. During the summer, the WSA is too hot and dry for these uses. It is expected that demand and use of this area for motorized recreational activities will increase.

The WSA's relatively flat, broad topography renders it vulnerable to vehicle encroachment. The lack of natural barriers would make it extremely difficult to manage as wilderness.

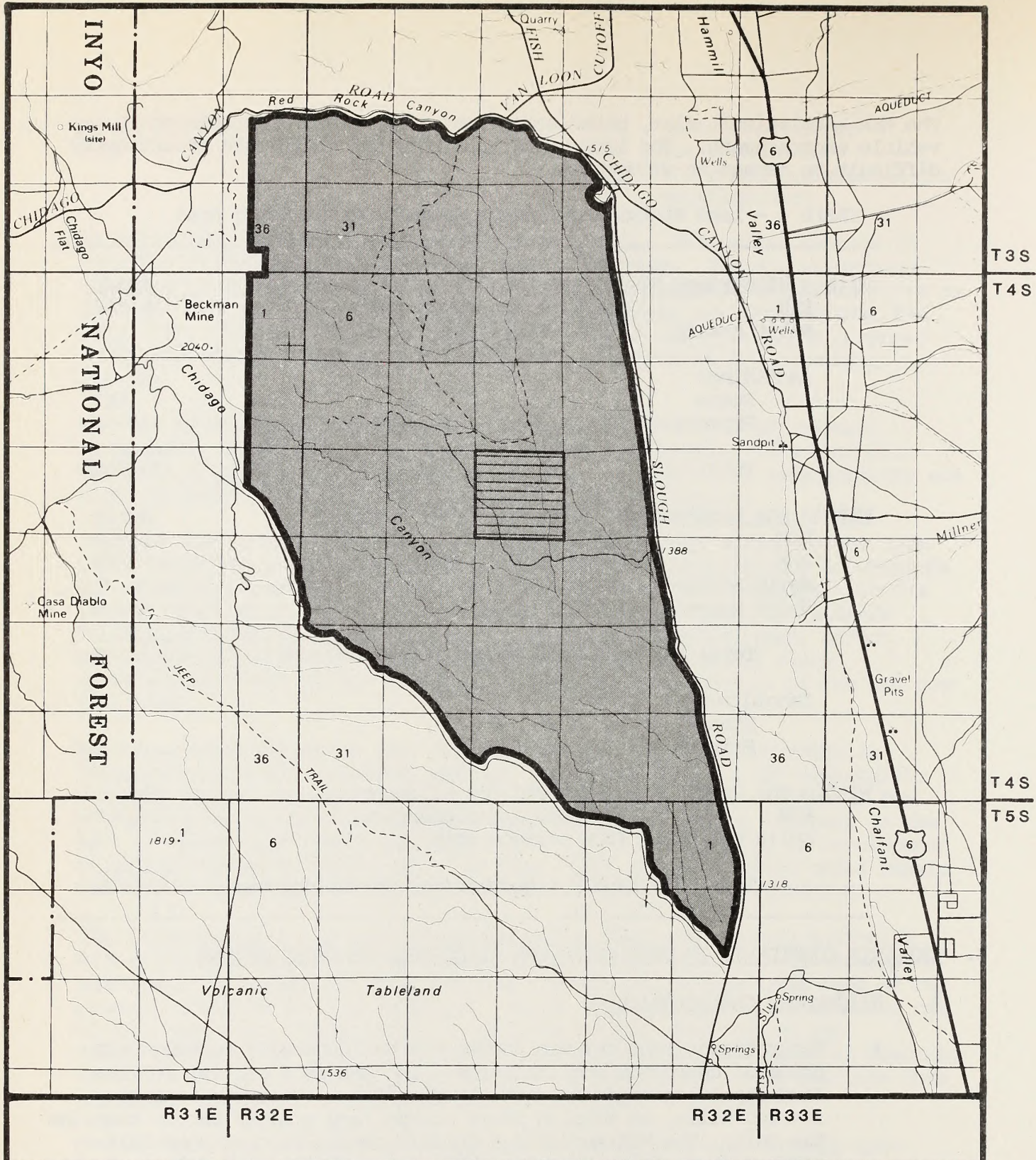
TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	19,702
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		663
Private		0
Total		20,365
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Study Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	19,702
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		19,702


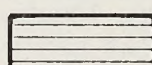
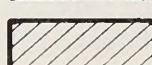
3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The Chidago Canyon WSA has generally retained its primeval character and influence. The WSA is a gentle, rolling landscape sloping in an easterly direction. Volcanic terraces, rounded hills, en echelon fault scarps, and a major canyon comprise the unit. The WSA supports a uniform composition of shadscale scrub such as spiny hopsage, shadscale, ephedra, and dalea. During certain years, wildflowers are prevalent. During the wilderness inventory, it was determined that only a few primitive vehicle routes were located in the WSA. Upon further review, it was determined that man's works actually include approximately 25 miles of primitive vehicle routes and 11 miles of motorcycle and equestrian trails. In addition, the unit contains



- | | | | |
|---|------|---|---|
|  | NONE |  | RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |
|  | |  | RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS |
|  | |  | LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |

- | | |
|---|--------------|
|  | SPLIT ESTATE |
|  | STATE |
|  | PRIVATE |

**Chidago Canyon
Proposal
MAP-1**

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MILES

010-079
JUNE, 1988

several livestock water troughs, a pipeline, two water storage tanks and three wildlife guzzlers. However, the sizeable expanse of this WSA reduces these influences to a low level of significance.

2. Solitude: The WSA's size and gently rolling topography provide outstanding opportunities for solitude and freedom of unconfined movement. Chidago Canyon, due to its deeply incised nature, enhances these opportunities in the southern portion of the WSA. An electric transmission line parallels the western boundary just outside the WSA and visually affects opportunities for solitude on a limited and localized basis.

Additionally, the outside visual and noise influences of periodic vehicle use on the eastern boundary road slightly diminish solitude along the WSA's eastern edge.

This WSA may be overflowed in the future by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission during approved military operations. The visual intrusions and associated noise create temporary effects on solitude which are deemed acceptable and necessary as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and unconfined recreation: Opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation abound within the WSA. Area visitors can participate in backpacking, camping, nature appreciation, historical sightseeing, scenic photography, hunting, horseback riding, and other activities. No permanent water sources exist in the unit; backpacking is limited by the need to carry or cache water. Most primitive recreation activities would occur in the cooler winter and spring months.
4. Special features: The WSA contains numerous features of significance. The area contains geological curiosities including rhyolitic columns in Chidago Canyon and fault scarps. Wildlife values of the WSA include nesting habitat for golden eagles and other raptors in the Red Rock and Chidago Canyons. The WSA also contains crucial winter habitat for mule deer who rely on the unit's topographical relief for protective cover from the Tableland's strong winter winds. Portions of the WSA are rich in cultural values, including petroglyphs.

B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS)

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 19,702 acres of the Intermountain Sagebrush/Great Basin Sagebrush ecosystem. The Chidago Canyon WSA would not increase the diversity of the types of ecosystems represented in the NWPS.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	NWPS Areas		Other BLM Studies	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush/ Great Basin Sagebrush	1	32,407	55	1,185,573
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush/ Great Basin Sagebrush	0	0	19	201,107

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of four major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3 - Wilderness Opportunities for Residents of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	NWPS Areas		Other BLM Studies	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>California</u>				
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Los Angeles/Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
Riverside/San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
<u>Nevada</u>				
Reno	39	4,647,230	170	6,904,809

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA is within 50 air miles of one BLM WSA recommended for wilderness designation. The John Muir and the Ansel Adams Wilderness, 15 and 30 miles to the west, respectively, are the nearest designated wilderness areas. These wilderness areas are administered by the Inyo National Forest. Other nearby designated wilderness areas include Yosemite and Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Parks which are managed by the National Park Service (NPS) and the Hoover Wilderness which is managed by the Toiyabe and Inyo National Forests.

C. Manageability

The Chidago Canyon WSA is manageable as wilderness, but only with difficulty. The gentle nature of the rolling landscape and its sparse vegetation make the WSA very susceptible to physical scarring from activities related to indiscriminate off-highway vehicle use. Frequent signing, fencing most of the border, providing detailed maps, and intensive patrolling would be required to insure the integrity of the unit. The broad, flat nature of the WSA is easily penetrated by vehicles of all types. The WSA contains few natural barriers to prevent vehicles from entering the area. Constant surveillance would be required to protect the area's wilderness values.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of information known at the time of the preliminary suitability recommendation: The southern half of the Chidago Canyon WSA lies within the BLM Casa Diablo Geology - Energy - Minerals (G-E-M) Resource Area (GRA) and the northern half lies within the Benton Range GRA. The G-E-M data in the Affected Environment section of the 1987 BLM Wilderness Recommendations, Benton-Owens Valley/Bodie-Coleville Study Areas Final EIS, indicate that the WSA has a moderate potential for occurrence of gold, silver, lead, tungsten, building stone and geothermal energy. As of the spring of 1986, one unpatented mining claim had been located for metallic minerals in the northwestern corner of the WSA.

The GRA report showed that the WSA lies on the eastern edge of the Chidago Mining District. The Chance, Beckman, and Casa Diablo mines are one half mile to three miles west of the WSA and are credited with approximately \$200,000 worth of gold production. Mineralization in this district is characterized by gold, silver, and base metal bearing quartz veins in Cretaceous granitic intrusive rocks. This geologic environment is present in a strip of land one half mile wide along the western side of the WSA. This area was, therefore, rated as having a moderate potential for the occurrence of these metallic minerals using the BLM mineral classification scheme.

The eastern one half of the WSA has moderate potential for the occurrence of non-metallic minerals due to the presence of Bishop tuff. Bishop tuff is a common variety decorative building stone currently in demand. The entire WSA is classified as having a moderate potential for geothermal energy based on the proximity of potential volcanic heat

sources and the existence of thermal springs north and south of the WSA. These BLM mineral potential ratings are shown on the accompanying mineral potential map.

2. Summary of significant new mineral resource data collected since the suitability recommendation, which should be considered in the final recommendation: No U.S. Geologic Survey (USGS) or U.S. Bureau of Mines (BOM) mineral surveys were conducted in this WSA. BLM records dated March 25, 1988, indicate that no unpatented mining claims, mineral leases, or mineral material sales contracts/permits exist in the WSA. No new mineral resource information concerning this WSA was generated as of May 3, 1988.

E. Impacts on Resources

The following table summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for all alternatives considered including designation or non-designation of the entire area as wilderness. (For a full explanation of this summary, refer to the Benton-Owens Valley/Bodie-Coleville Wilderness - Final Environmental Impact Statement.)

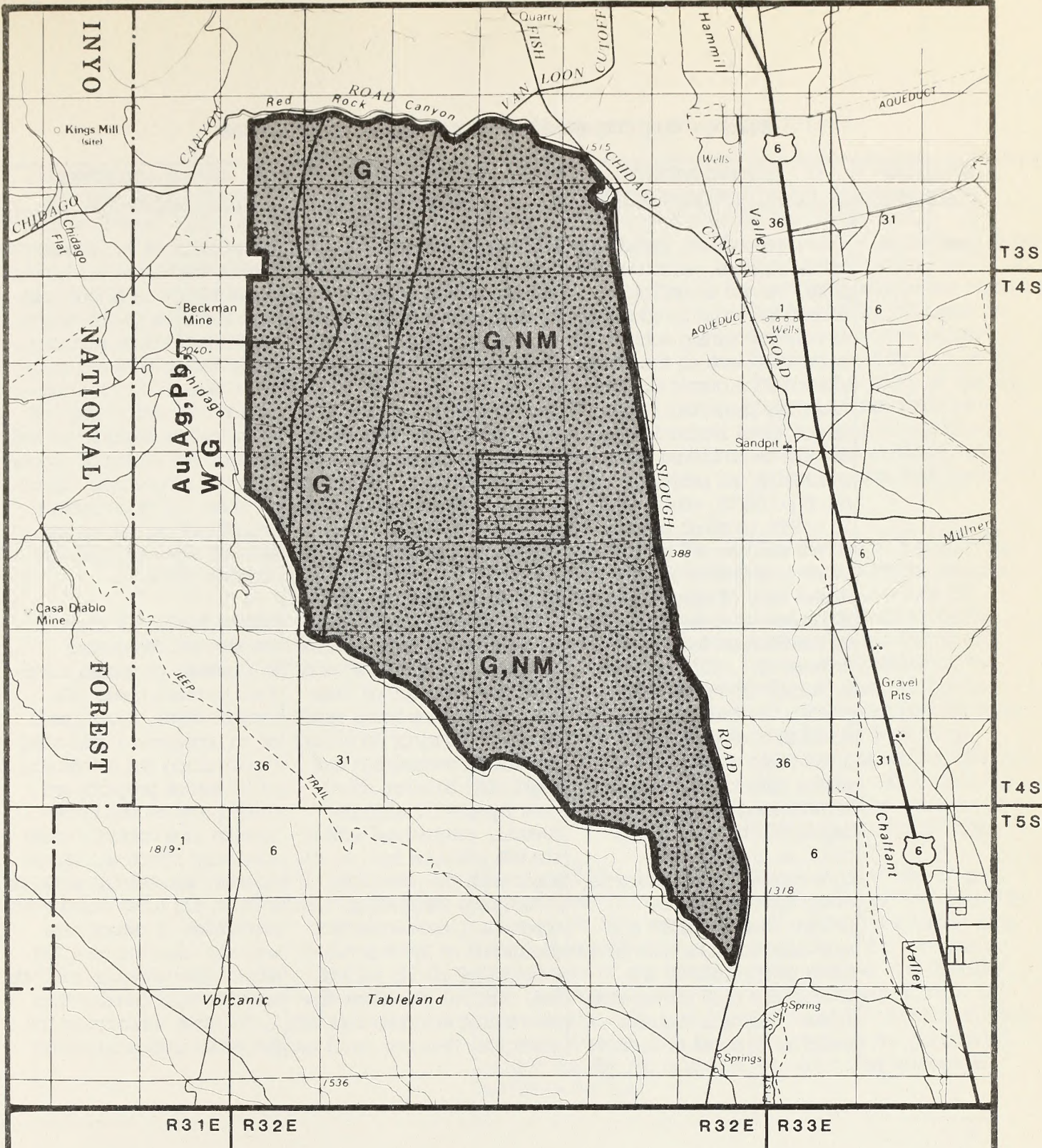


Table 4 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	PARTIAL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Wilderness Values	<p>Wilderness values, particularly naturalness, solitude, and primitive and unconfined recreation would be adversely impacted by mining activities and development of the transmission line corridor. Additionally, projected levels of motorized recreation use as well as continued livestock operations and projected livestock projects, would result in slight to minor impacts on naturalness and solitude. Overall, there would be a direct loss of naturalness on 105 acres with the perception of naturalness impaired over an area of 4,690 acres primarily in the northwest portion of the WSA. Solitude would be disrupted within 2,000 acres as a result of mining operations. Short-term impacts ranging from negligible to minor would occur as a result of construction and maintenance of livestock projects. Crucial winter habitat for mule deer would be lost on 100 acres as a result of the underground gold mining activities. Geologic features could be impacted or lost on</p>	<p>Wilderness designation would retain and slightly enhance wilderness values in the WSA by eliminating motorized recreation use (500 visitor days) as well as precluding mining for decorative building stone and development of the transmission line corridor within the WSA along the western boundary. Wilderness values in the northwest portion of the WSA would be adversely affected by development of an underground gold mine due to the high probability of determination of valid existing rights. Construction and maintenance of existing and proposed livestock facilities would result in slight to minor localized impacts on naturalness and negligible to minor short-term impacts on solitude. Overall, naturalness within the WSA would be lost on 100 acres with the perception of naturalness impaired in 2,290 acres. Solitude would be diminished on 2,000 acres as a result of mining activities. Crucial mule deer winter habitat would be lost and geological features could be</p>	<p>Designation of 8,326 acres within the WSA as wilderness would result in slight positive benefits to the area's wilderness values particularly naturalness and solitude as a result of eliminating 150 visitor days of motorized recreation use and prohibiting mining of decorative building stone. Opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation and special features would be slightly enhanced.</p> <p>Within the 12,015 acres of the WSA not designated wilderness, projected motorized recreation use (600 visitor days), development of an underground gold mine, construction and maintenance of livestock projects and development of the transmission line corridor would adversely affect wilderness values. Naturalness would be lost on 100 acres and the perception of naturalness would be impaired on 4,290 acres. The sense of solitude would be diminished within 2,000 acres surrounding the projected underground gold</p>

Table 4 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative (Cont'd)

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	PARTIAL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Wilderness Values (continued)	105 acres as a result of mining activities. Throughout the remainder of the WSA no impacts other than very negligible impacts are anticipated for special features including raptor nesting habitat and cultural values.	lost on 100 acres as a result of mining activities.	mine. Additionally, construction of the transmission line corridor would result in localized, short-term impacts. Approximately 100 acres of crucial mule deer winter habitat would be lost in the northwest portion of the WSA. Overall, there would be a minor impact to wilderness values with moderate, localized impacts anticipated.
Motorized Recreation Use	There would be no impacts on motorized recreation use which is anticipated to increase slowly from the existing 500 visitor days to a total of 700 visitor days.	Motorized recreation use would be prohibited and 500 visitor days would be foregone within the WSA. Due to the projected low level of use within the WSA and the availability of opportunities on public lands outside the WSA, there would be a slight impact on motorized recreation use.*	There would be a slight impact as wilderness designation would preclude 150 visitor days of motorized recreation use within the designated portion of the WSA.* However, within the non-designated portion there would be no impacts on motorized recreation use with the current 350 visitor days. anticipated to increase to a total of 600 visitor days.
Transmission Line Development	There would be no impact on development of the one-half-mile-wide transmission line corridor. The one-quarter mile width within the WSA would be available for use along 4 1/2 miles of the western boundary.	There would be a minor impact on development of the transmission line corridor. Wilderness designation would preclude use of one-quarter mile of the one-half mile-wide corridor. The remaining one-quarter-mile width is outside the WSA and would be available for use.	There would no impact on development of the one-half-mile-wide transmission line corridor. The one-quarter mile width of the corridor within the WSA along 4 1/2 miles of the western boundary would be in the portion not designated as wilderness.

Table 4 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative (Cont'd)

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	PARTIAL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Mining of Decorative Building Stone	There would be no impact on the mining of decorative building stone. Mineral sales would be permitted. A 5-acre quarry for Bishop tuff is projected for the WSA	Mining of decorative building stone, including a projected 5-acre quarry for Bishop tuff would be prohibited. There would be only a minor impact as Bishop tuff is available in areas outside the WSA.	There would be a minor impact on mining of decorative building stone within the 8,350 acres of the WSA designated wilderness. Wilderness designation would prohibit mineral sales including a projected 5-acre quarry for Bishop tuff. Within the 12,015 acres not designated wilderness mineral sales would be permitted. However, no mining of decorative building stone is anticipated due to the lack of identified sources. There would be no impact.

*Since this impact was identified in the Benton-Owens Valley/Bodie-Coleville Final EIS, it has been determined the prohibition of motorized vehicle use under this alternative would have greater (moderate) impacts than originally anticipated. The lack of snow-free areas during the winter use months as well as the potential for other local vehicle use restrictions outside the unit contribute to this reassessment of adverse impacts.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

During the inventory phase, a few comments were received addressing expansion of the utility line corridor and the existence of unique wildlife values.

After the inventory, comments were received during the wilderness study process. One comment recommended the area be designated wilderness while another comment noted opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined types of recreation. One comment noted the groundwater aquifer capability for the Fish Slough area, while another indicated that the boundary transmission line is a visual intrusion.

During the study phase, a public meeting and public hearing were held in association with the draft EIS. The public meeting was held in Markleeville, California, and the public hearing in Bishop, California. Comments were received both orally through the hearing, and in writing during the 90-day public review period. A total of 84 written and oral comments were received. Thirty-four comments supported the Bureau's

no-wilderness recommendation. Forty-two comments supported the all-wilderness alternative, and eight comments supported the partial-wilderness alternative.

Although no Federal agency comments were received specific to this WSA, the Department of Energy, Western Area Power Administration submitted a general written comment requesting the Bureau to provide transmission line corridor space for future construction of transmission lines on public lands.

No State or County agency comments were received specific to this WSA.

Fish Slough

CA-010-080

FISH SLOUGH WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CA-010-080)

1. THE STUDY AREA --- 15,331 acres

The Fish Slough WSA is located in northern Inyo County and southern Mono County, approximately six miles north of Bishop, California. The WSA includes 14,700 acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands, no State lands, and 631 acres of private inholdings (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The northern boundary of the WSA follows non-public land and an improved ranching road to the east, then heads south along Fish Slough county road. Along Fish Slough Road the boundary travels an irregular pattern adjacent to the county road, public land, and private land until it meets Casa Diablo County Road. The boundary follows Casa Diablo County Road in a northwesterly direction until it meets a 750 KV powerline right-of-way. The western boundary proceeds north along the right-of-way until it intersects the private land and improved ranching road on the north.

The WSA is situated in the west margin of the Basin and Range geomorphic province and lies in the southern portion of the Volcanic Tableland, a geological result of cinder and hot gas eruptions from vents in Long Valley which occurred 700,000 years ago. This unique landscape is characterized by a series of successive rhyolitic ash deposits which culminate in a broad tableland terrain feature. Topography is mostly gentle and rolling. Volcanic terraces and abrupt cliffs resulting from an echelon fault scarps (a series of parallel scarps formed by faulting activity) are evident in this WSA. Elevation ranges from 4,382 feet to 5,800 feet. Numerous canyons and drainages dissect the eastern portion of the unit. Fumarolic mounds and ridges dot the landscape adding scenic variety. The pastel volcanic color tones provide striking visual effects by the sun's low angle during morning and evening hours. The vegetation, which is uniformly distributed throughout, consists mostly of Great Basin shrubs. No permanent water source exists in the WSA.

The eastern three-fourths of the WSA is part of the Fish Slough Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). The ACEC management plan prescribes protection of the aquifer recharge source within the WSA in order to maintain the wetland habitat which lies outside and adjacent to the WSA.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Various suitability recommendations were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) for the Benton-Owens/Bodie-Coleville Wilderness Study Areas. A summary of the area's wilderness values was included in the Final EIS. Three different suitability recommendations were analyzed in the EISs: all wilderness, partial wilderness recommending approximately 99% of the area suitable, and no wilderness.

2. <u>RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE</u> ---	0	acres recommended for wilderness
	14,700	BLM acres recommended for non-wilderness

No wilderness is the recommendation for this WSA. The entire acreage in this WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. The all wilderness alternative is considered to be the environmentally preferred alternative as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The no wilderness alternative will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

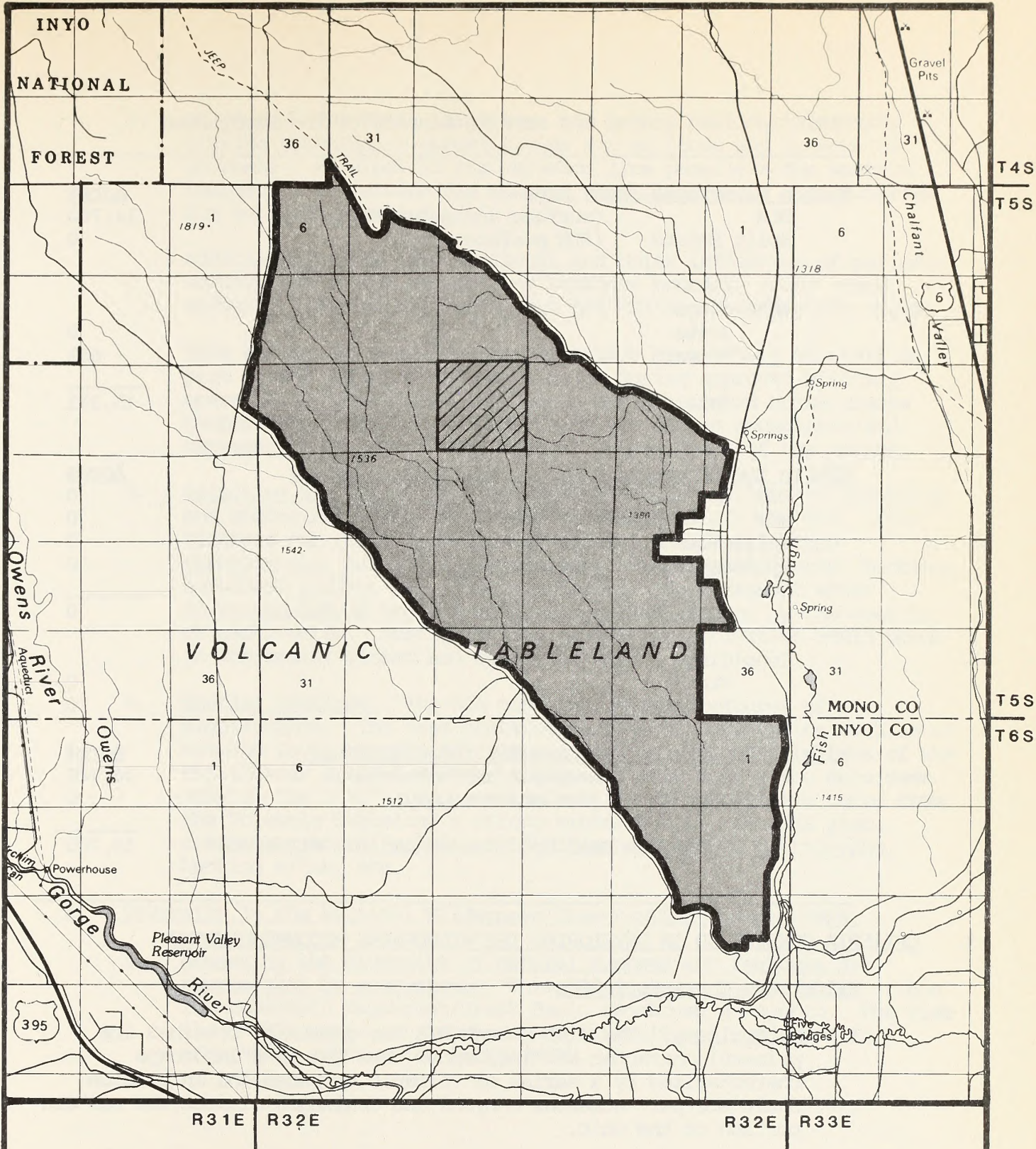
The WSA is recommended non-suitable because of manageability concerns, the potential for mineral occurrence, and future transmission line expansion needs outweigh the area's wilderness values.




Much of the WSA's relatively flat, broad topography renders it vulnerable to vehicle encroachment. The lack of natural barriers along the boundaries would make it extremely difficult to manage as wilderness. Vehicles such as four-wheel drive, motorcycles, all-terrain vehicles and mountain bikes can easily drive off the boundary roads into this sparsely vegetated WSA. Substantial signing and fencing as well as intensive patrolling would be required to protect the area. There are approximately eight miles of routes of travel including primitive ways, washes and other unmaintained routes of access which will remain available for vehicular use.


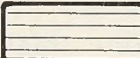

Solitude can be disrupted visually and from noise of periodic vehicle use occurring on roads which surround the WSA. Additionally, the 750-KV transmission line along the western boundary of the unit visually limits solitude locally. Some portions of the WSA allow unobstructed views of the transmission line up to a distance of three miles.

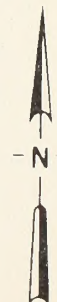
Resource conflicts in the WSA include moderate potential for nonmetallic minerals and geothermal resources. There is current interest in the area to quarry decorative building stone known as Bishop tuff.

The Benton-Owens Valley Management Framework Plan prescribes a half-mile-wide utility line corridor along the western boundary where a transmission line currently exists. This corridor lies in the WSA one-quarter mile east of the present transmission-line corridor along the 2-1/2-mile west boundary. There is a high demand to use this corridor. Most recently, Oxbow Geothermal Corporation demonstrated a need to utilize this corridor for construction of an electric transmission-line. Additionally, several utility/energy organizations have expressed support to accommodate future use in this corridor.



- | | |
|--|---|
|  NONE | RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS |
|  | LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |

- | | |
|---|--------------|
|  | SPLIT ESTATE |
|  | STATE |
|  | PRIVATE |



**Fish Slough
Proposal
MAP-1**

0 1 2 3
MILES

010-080
JUNE, 1988

TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	14,700
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		631
Total		<u>15,331</u>
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Study Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<u>0</u>
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	14,700
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>14,700</u>

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The Fish Slough WSA has generally retained its primeval character and influence. The WSA is a landscape characterized by a series of volcanic terraces and an echelon fault scarps. Numerous canyons and drainages dissect the eastern portion of the unit.

Toward the western edge the topography is more gentle and rolling. The WSA supports a uniform composition of shadscale scrub such as spiny hopsage, shadscale, ephedra, dalea, and cholla. During certain years, wildflowers are prevalent. There are very few human influences in the WSA. Approximately eight miles of primitive vehicle routes are located in the WSA. These vehicle routes are substantially unnoticeable in the WSA as a whole.

2. Solitude: The WSA's large size and gently rolling topography provide outstanding opportunities for solitude and freedom of movement. An electric transmission line parallels the western boundary just outside the WSA and visually affects opportunities for solitude locally.

Additionally, the outside visual and noise influences of periodic vehicle use on the eastern and southern boundary roads would slightly diminish solitude along the WSA's east and south edges.

This WSA may be overflowed in the future by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission during approved military operations. The visual intrusions and associated noise create temporary effects on solitude which are deemed acceptable and necessary as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and unconfined recreation: Opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation abound within the WSA. Area visitors can participate in backpacking, camping, nature appreciation, historical sightseeing, scenic photography, hunting, horseback riding, and other activities. No permanent water sources exist in the unit; backpacking is limited by the need to or cache water. Most primitive recreation activities would occur in the cooler winter and spring months.
4. Special features: The WSA contains several features of significance. The area contains geological curiosities such as an echelon fault scarps and fumarolic mounds. Wildlife values of the WSA include crucial winter habitat for mule deer. The mule deer rely on the unit's topographical relief for protective cover from the Volcanic Tableland's strong winter winds. The WSA also contains cultural values of significance such as petroglyphs, hunting sites, etc.

B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS)

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 14,700 acres of the Intermountain Sagebrush/Great Basin Sagebrush ecosystem. The Fish Slough WSA would not increase the diversity of the types of ecosystems represented in the NWPS.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush/ Great Basin Sagebrush	1	32,407	55	1,190,575
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush/ Great Basin Sagebrush	0	0	19	206,109

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of four major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3 - Wilderness Opportunities for Residents of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>California</u>				
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Los Angeles/Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
Riverside/San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
<u>Nevada</u>				
Reno	39	4,647,230	170	6,904,809

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA is within 50 air miles of three BLM WSAs recommended for wilderness designation. The John Muir and the Ansel Adams Wilderness, 15 and 30 miles to the west, respectively, are the nearest designated wilderness areas. These wilderness areas are administered by the Inyo National Forest. Other nearby designated wilderness areas include Yosemite and Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Parks which are managed by the National Park Service and the Hoover Wilderness which is managed by the Toiyabe and Inyo National Forests.

C. Manageability

The Fish Slough WSA is manageable as wilderness, but only with difficulty. The predominant gentle nature of the rolling landscape and its sparse vegetation make the WSA susceptible to indiscriminate off-road vehicle use. Frequent signing, fencing most of the border, providing detailed maps, and intensive patrolling would be required to insure the integrity of the unit. The broad, flat nature of the WSA is easily penetrated by vehicles of all types. The WSA contains few natural barriers to prevent vehicles from entering the area. Constant surveillance would be required to protect the area's wilderness values.

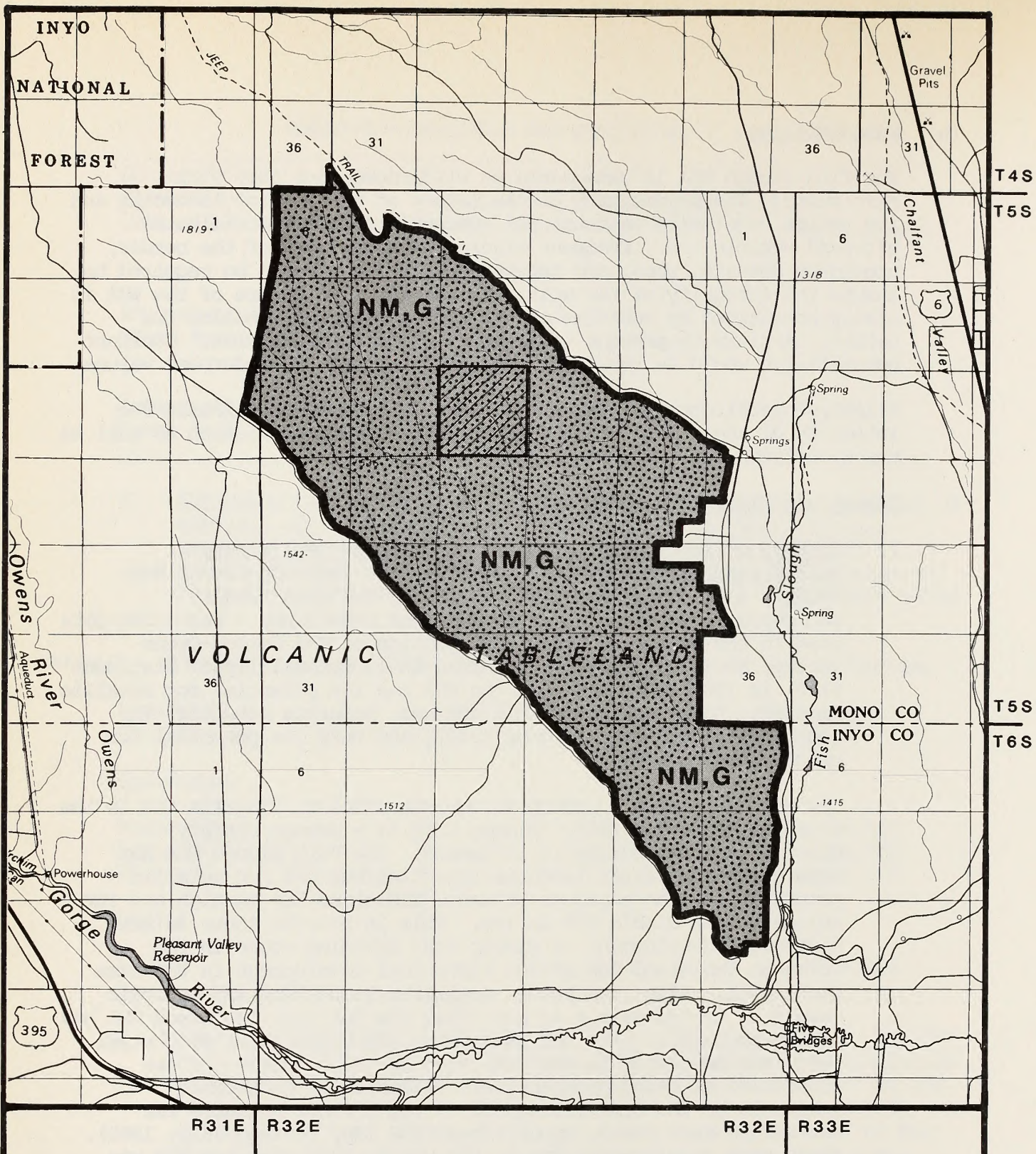
Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of information known at the time of preliminary suitability recommendation: A portion of the Fish Slough WSA (mostly in T. 5 S., R. 32 E.) is in the BLM Casa Diablo Geology-Energy-Mineral (G-E-M) Resource Area (GRA). BLM G-E-M data used in the Affected Environment section of the Benton-Owens Valley, Bodie-Coleville Study Areas Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in 1987 indicated that the WSA has low potential for metallic minerals, no potential for oil and gas, moderate potential for non-metallic minerals (Bishop tuff), and very low potential for uranium and thorium.

The WSA has moderate potential for non-metallic minerals due to the presence of Bishop tuff. Bishop tuff is a common variety decorative stone currently in demand. The Fish Slough WSA has moderate non-metallic resource potential but the non-metallic potential for the adjacent Volcanic Tableland WSA is high and for adjacent Casa Diablo WSA is low. This is because there is more historical development of Bishop tuff building stone in the Volcanic Tableland WSA and no historical development in the Casa Diablo WSA. Also, the better proximity to markets and geologic nature of the materials is such that the Volcanic Tableland WSA has a high potential. The WSA has moderate potential for geothermal resources according to the BLM classification scheme and was classified as being prospectively valuable for geothermal resources by the U.S. Geological Survey ("Lands Valuable for Geothermal Resources", unpublished USGS map, revised July, 1985). There were no mining claims in the WSA in 1987 when the EIS was prepared.

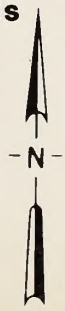
2. Summary of significant new mineral resource data collected since the suitability recommendation which should be considered in the final recommendation: No U.S. Geologic Survey (USGS) or U.S. Bureau of Mines (BOM) mineral surveys were conducted in this WSA. BLM records dated March 24, 1988, showed no unpatented mining



- NONE Recommended for Wilderness
- Recommended for Non Wilderness
- Land outside WSA Recommended for Wilderness
- Split Estate
- State
- Private

- Explanation**
- High Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals
 - Moderate Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals
 - M** Moderate Mineral Potential Location in a High Mineral Potential Area
 - H** High Mineral Potential Location in a Moderate Mineral Potential Area

- Commodity Symbols**
- G** Geothermal
 - NM** Non-metallic



claims, mineral leases, or mineral material sales contracts/permits in this WSA. No new data has been generated since the EIS of 1987.

E. Impacts on Resources

The following table summarizes the effects on pertinent resource alternatives considered including designation or non-designation of the entire area as wilderness. (For a full explanation of this summary, refer to the Benton-Owens Valley/Bodie-Coleville Wilderness - Final Environmental Impact Statement.)

Table 4 - Comparison of Impacts of the Proposed Action and the Alternatives

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	PARTIAL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Wilderness Values	<p>Mining activities associated with the 5-acre quarry for decorative building stone and development of the 2-1/2-mile transmission-line corridor along the western boundary would result in the primary impacts on wilderness values. The perception of naturalness would be impaired over 2,400 acres and there would be a direct loss of naturalness on 5 acres. Solitude within the WSA would be diminished within a 600-acre area surrounding the mining activities resulting in a moderate impact. Additional short-term disruptions to solitude would occur within an area of 2,000 acres along the transmission-line corridor during powerline construction activities. Projected motorized recreation use (550 visitor days) and livestock grazing activities including construction of 1 mile of fence would result in slight to minor impacts to wilderness values. Opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation would be slightly impacted on a localized basis as a result of projected motorized recre-</p>	<p>Wilderness designation would retain and slightly enhance wilderness values by eliminating 350 visitor days of motorized recreation use as well as precluding mining for decorative building stone and development of the transmission line corridor within the WSA along the western boundary. The proposed livestock fence would result in slight to minor localized impacts to wilderness values and impair the perception of naturalness on 50 acres. Special features including habitat for reintroduced pronghorn antelope, cultural values, and geological features would be slightly enhanced.</p>	<p>Wilderness values would be retained and slightly enhanced within the 15,102 acres of the WSA (over 98%) designated as wilderness. Motorized recreation use (350 visitor days) and mining activities for decorative building stone would be eliminated, benefiting wilderness values. The proposed 1-mile livestock fence would result in slight to minor impacts to wilderness values and impair the perception of naturalness on 50 acres. Special features including habitat for pronghorn antelope, cultural values, and geological features would be slightly enhanced.</p> <p>Within the 229 acres of the WSA not designated wilderness, development of the 2-1/2-mile transmission-line corridor would result in adverse impacts on wilderness values including impairing the perception of naturalness within a 2,000-acre viewshed that extends into the designated portion of the WSA. Short-term disruptions would also occur</p>

Table 4 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative (cont.)

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	PARTIAL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Wilderness Values (continued)	ation use, mining of decorative building stone, and development of the transmission line corridor. There would be slight localized impacts to special features.		within the same 2,000-acre area as a result of power-line construction activities within the transmission-line corridor.
Motorized Recreation Use	There would be no impacts on motorized recreation use which is anticipated to increase slowly from the existing 350 visitor days to a total of 550 visitor days.	Motorized recreation use would be prohibited and 350 visitor days would be foregone within the WSA. Due to the projected low level of use within the WSA and the availability of opportunities on public lands outside the WSA, there would be a minor impact on motorized recreation use.	Motorized recreation use would be prohibited and 350 visitor days would be foregone within the designated portion of the WSA which amounts to over 98% of the WSA. There is no motorized vehicle use or existing primitive vehicle routes within the remaining 210 acres of the WSA not designated wilderness. Overall there would be a minor impact on motorized recreation use.
Transmission-Line Corridor Development	There would be no impact on development of the one-half-mile-wide transmission-line corridor. The one-quarter mile width within the WSA would be available for use along 2 1/2 miles of the west boundary.	There would be a minor impact on development of the transmission-line corridor. Wilderness designation would preclude use of one-quarter mile of the one-half-mile-wide corridor. The remaining one-quarter-mile width is outside the WSA and would be available for use. However, should the Casa Diablo WSA also be designated wilderness there would be a potential moderate impact to the future development of the transmission-line corridor, since this corridor would be entirely within the areas designated as wilderness.	There would be no impact on development of the one-half-mile-wide transmission-line corridor. The one-quarter mile width within the WSA along 2 1/2 miles of the west boundary would be in the portion not designated as wilderness.

Table 4 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative (Cont'd)

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	PARTIAL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Mining of Decorative Building Stone	There would be no impact on the mining of decorative building stone. Mineral sales would be permitted. A 5-acre quarry for Bishop tuff is projected for the WSA.	Mining of decorative building stone, including a projected 5-acre quarry for Bishop tuff would be prohibited. There would be only a minor impact as Bishop tuff is available in areas outside the WSA.	There would be a minor impact on mining of decorative building stone within the 15,102 acres of the WSA designated wilderness. Wilderness designation would prohibit mineral sales including a projected 5-acre

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

During the inventory phase, a few comments were received addressing the area's high wildlife values and the potential need for transmission-line corridor expansion.

After inventory, comments were received during the wilderness study process. Comments recommended wilderness designation, noted opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation, noted the groundwater aquifer capability for the area and indicated the boundary transmission line is a visual intrusion.

During the study, a public meeting and public hearing were held in association with the draft EIS. The public meeting was held in Markleeville, and the public hearing in Bishop, California. A total of 83 written and oral comments were received. Thirty-three comments supported the Bureau's recommendation. Forty-two comments supported the all-wilderness alternative, and eight comments supported the partial-wilderness alternative.

Although no Federal agency comments were received specific to this WSA, the Department of Energy, Western Area Power Administration submitted a general written comment requesting the Bureau provide transmission-line corridor space for future construction of transmission lines on public lands. No State agency comments were received specific to this WSA.

The Inyo County Board of Supervisors passed a resolution opposing any additional wilderness areas in Inyo County. No comments specific to the Mono County portion of the WSA were received from Mono County.

Volcanic Tablelands

CA-010-081

VOLCANIC TABLELAND WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CA-010-081)

1. THE STUDY AREA --- 12,499 acres

The Volcanic Tableland WSA is located in southern Mono County and northern Inyo County, approximately five miles north of Bishop, California. The WSA includes 12,499 acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands, no State lands and no private inholdings (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The northern boundary of the WSA follows Casa Diablo Mine Road to the southeast, then heads south and west along an improved road and private lands. The boundary then proceeds north along a 750 kV powerline right-of-way. As the western boundary moves north it jogs around a section of non-public land then continues along the powerline right-of-way until it meets Casa Diablo Mine Road on the north.

The WSA is located along the western edge of the Basin and Range geomorphic province. The unit occupies the southern portion of the Volcanic Tableland, a geological result of cinder and hot gas eruptions from vents in Long Valley which occurred 700,000 years ago. This unique and vast landscape comprises a series of successive layers of rhyolitic ash deposits which formed a broad tableland expanse gently sloping from northwest to southeast. Elevation ranges from 4,480 feet to 5,200 feet. Generally unaffected by erosion, the unit contains a few low rolling hills and numerous uplifted volcanic terraces and ridges in the southern half of the WSA. Several small bouldery canyons are located along the WSA's southern boundary. The pinkish and reddish volcanic landscape colors provide striking visual hues during the morning and evening hours. Vegetation consists mostly of Great Basin shrubs. No permanent water source exists in the WSA.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Various suitability recommendations were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) for the Benton-Owens Valley/Bodie-Coleville Wilderness Study Areas. A summary of the area's wilderness values was included in the Final EIS. Three different suitability recommendations were analyzed in the EISs: all wilderness, partial wilderness recommending approximately 87% of the area suitable, and no wilderness.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE ---

0	acres recommended for wilderness
12,499	BLM acres recommended for non-wilderness

No wilderness is the recommendation for this WSA. The entire acreage in this WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. The all-wilderness alternative is considered to be the environmentally-preferred alternative as

it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The no wilderness alternative will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The WSA is recommended non-suitable because of its potential for geothermal and mineral occurrence, transmission-line corridor needs, and motorized/mechanized recreation outweigh the area's wilderness values. In addition, manageability was a strong consideration in the non-suitable recommendation.

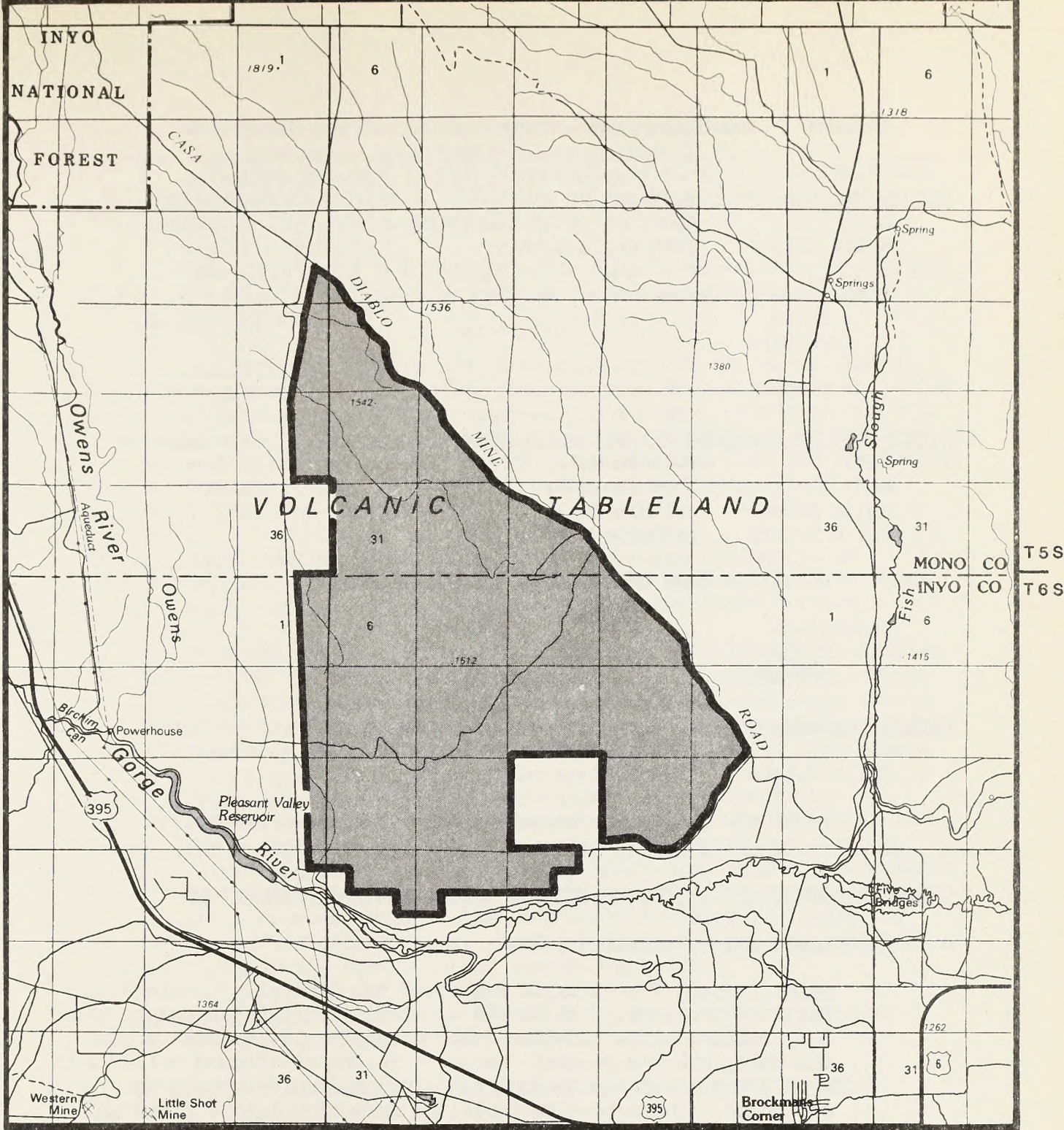
Solitude can be disrupted visually and from noise of local motorized recreation use primarily during winter months. This use occurs primarily on weekends on existing routes. Man-made visual influences outside the WSA such as a 750 kV electric transmission line along the western boundary and the community of Bishop may affect solitude along the WSA's southern and western borders. Some portions of the WSA allow unobstructed views of the transmission line up to a distance of one mile. Periodic vehicle use on the eastern and western boundary roads may also affect solitude visually and aurally.

Resource conflicts include moderate potential for geothermal resources and high potential for nonmetallic minerals. There is current demand in the area to quarry decorative building stone known as Bishop tuff.

The Benton-Owens Valley Management Framework Plan prescribes a half-mile wide utility line corridor along six miles of the western boundary. This corridor lies in the WSA one-quarter mile east of the present transmission line boundary. There is a high demand to use this corridor. Most recently, Oxbow Geothermal Corporation demonstrated a need to utilize this corridor for construction of an electric transmission line. Additionally, several utility/energy organizations have expressed interest in future use in this corridor.

The WSA sustains and provides suitable opportunities for motorized and mechanized recreational use, including motorcycle and mountain bike activities. Approximately 15 miles of primitive vehicle routes are located in the WSA. Use of these routes usually occurs from November to April. It is expected that demand and use of this area for motorized and mechanized recreational activities will increase.

The WSA's relatively flat, broad topography renders it vulnerable to vehicle encroachment. The area is popular with off-highway vehicle users and mountain bikers. Vehicles such as four-wheel drive, motorcycles, all-terrain vehicles and mountain bikes can easily drive off the boundary roads into this sparsely vegetated WSA. The lack of natural barriers would make it extremely difficult to manage as wilderness. Also, the outside sights of the Bishop community limits opportunities for solitude.



NONE

RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS

RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS

RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS

LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS

LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS

SPLIT ESTATE

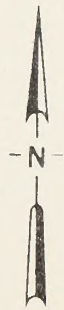
SPLIT ESTATE

STATE

STATE

PRIVATE

PRIVATE



**Volcanic Tableland
Proposal
MAP-1**



010-081
JUNE, 1988

TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	12,499
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
Total		12,499
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Study Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	12,499
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		12,499

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The Volcanic Tableland has generally retained its natural character. The WSA is a relatively flat landscape. Some low, rolling hills and occasional volcanic cliffs exist within the unit, but the general character is one of subdued relief with broad, tableland expanses gently sloping from northwest to southeast. The extensive tableland form of volcanic flats and drainages is relatively unique and unusual to the area.

The WSA supports mostly low shrubs such as spiny hopsage, shadscale, ephedra, and dalea as well as intermixed annual plants.

Only a few very minor influences of man are within the unit. This includes a reservoir and approximately 15 miles of primitive vehicle routes. The scale of these influences makes them substantially unnoticeable in the broad spaciousness of the WSA.

The nature of the landscape makes the WSA vulnerable to physical impacts from activities such as indiscriminate off-highway vehicle use.

2. Solitude: The WSA's uncluttered expanse is the major feature that provides outstanding opportunities for solitude and freedom of movement. The small canyons and volcanic bluffs in the WSA enhance these opportunities. However, the outside sights and sounds of the western-boundary transmission line and the Bishop community visually degrade opportunities from solitude on a limited and localized basis.

Additionally, the outside visual and noise influences of periodic vehicle use on the eastern and western boundary roads would slightly diminish solitude along the WSA's borders.

This WSA may be overflowed in the future by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission during approved military operations. The visual intrusions and associated noise create temporary effects on solitude which are deemed acceptable and necessary as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and unconfined recreation: Opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation abound within the WSA. Area visitors can participate in backpacking, camping, nature appreciation, historical sightseeing, scenic photography, hunting, horseback riding, and other activities. No permanent water sources exist in the unit so backpacking is limited by carried or cached water. Most primitive recreation activities occur in the cooler winter and spring months.
4. Special features: This WSA contains habitat for reintroduced pronghorn antelope in the northern tip of unit.

B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS)

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 12,499 acres of the Intermountain Sagebrush/Great Basin Sagebrush ecosystem. The Volcanic Tableland WSA would not increase the diversity of the types of ecosystems represented in the NWPS.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush/ Great Basin Sagebrush	1	32,407	55	1,192,776
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush/ Great Basin Sagebrush	0	0	19	208,310

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five-hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of four major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3 - Wilderness Opportunities for Residents of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>California</u>				
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Los Angeles/Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
Riverside/San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
<u>Nevada</u>				
Reno	39	4,647,230	170	6,904,809

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA is within 50 air miles of three BLM WSAs recommended for wilderness designation. The John Muir and the Ansel Adams Wilderness, 15 and 30 miles to the west, respectively, are the nearest designated wilderness areas. These wilderness areas are administered by the Inyo National Forest. Other nearby designated wilderness areas include Yosemite and Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Parks which are managed by the National Park Service and the Hoover Wilderness which is managed by the Toiyabe and Inyo National Forests.

C. Manageability

The Volcanic Tableland WSA is manageable as wilderness, but only with difficulty. The gentle nature of the rolling landscape and its sparse vegetation make the WSA very susceptible to physical scarring from activities related to indiscriminate off-highway vehicle use. Frequent signing, fencing most of the border, providing detailed maps, and intensive patrolling would be required to insure the integrity of the unit. The broad, flat nature of the WSA is easily penetrated by vehicles of all types. The WSA contains few natural barriers to prevent vehicles from entering the area. Constant surveillance would be required to protect the area's wilderness values.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

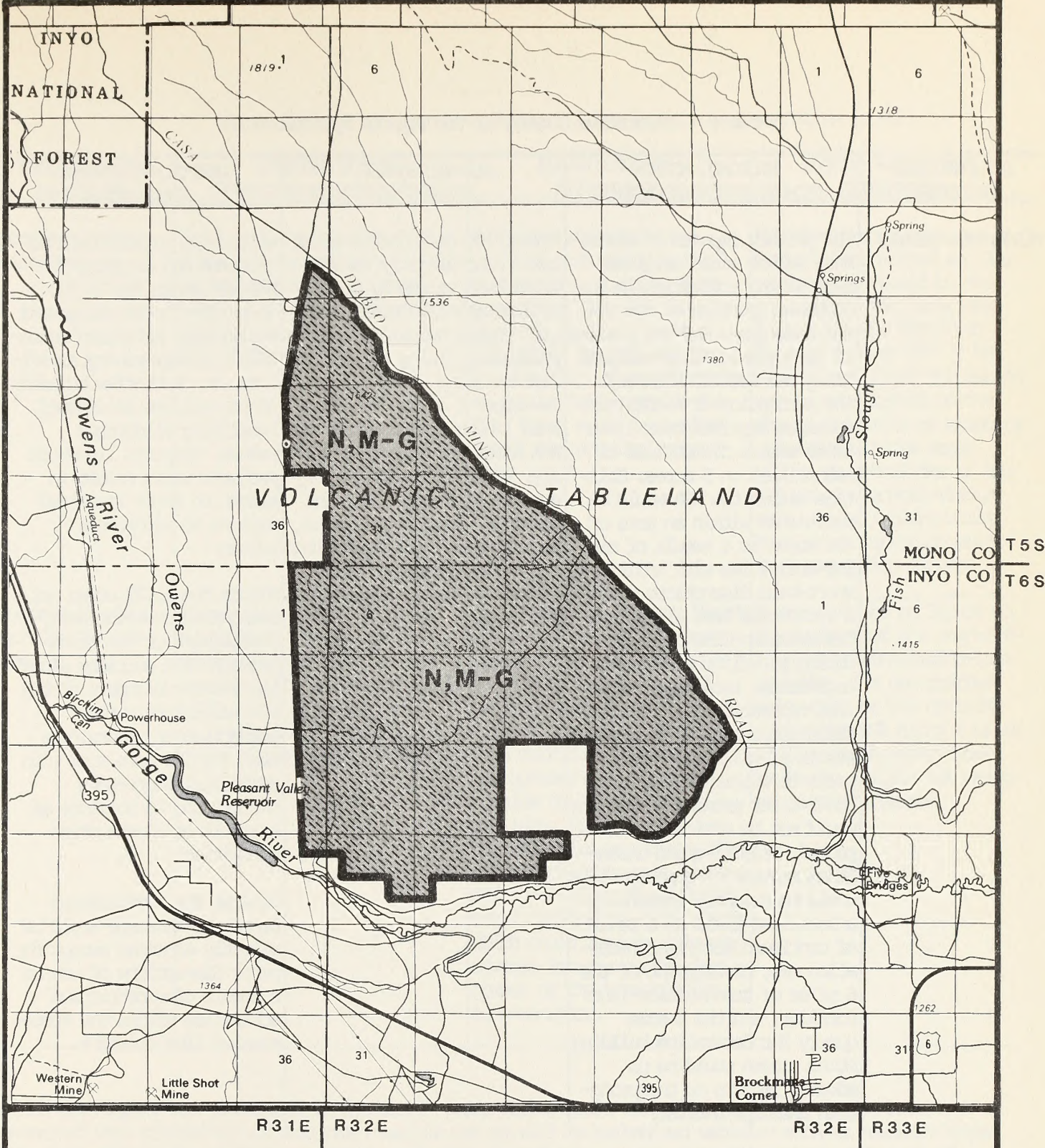
1. Summary of information known at the time of the preliminary suitability recommendation: The northern half of the Volcanic Tableland WSA lies within the BLM Casa Diablo Geology-Energy-Minerals (G-E-M) Resource Area (GRA). This G-E-M report does not specifically analyze the southern half of the Volcanic Tableland WSA, however, the G-E-M report discusses the area in general terms. BLM G-E-M data in the Affected Environment section of the Benton-Owens Valley/Bodie-Coleville Study Areas Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in 1987 indicated that the Volcanic Tableland WSA has low potential for metallic minerals, no potential for oil and gas, and very low potential for uranium and thorium. There is moderate potential for geothermal resources and this area was classified as being prospectively valuable for geothermal resources by the U.S. Geological Survey in 1985 ("Lands Valuable for Geothermal Resources", unpublished USGS map, revised July, 1985).

The WSA has a high potential for non-metallic minerals due to the presence of the Bishop Tuff. Bishop tuff is a common variety decorative stone currently in demand. The adjacent Fish Slough WSA has a moderate potential for non-metallics. This difference is due to the fact that more historical production of Bishop tuff has occurred in the Volcanic Tableland WSA. There are existing active mining pits in the Bishop tuff approximately one-quarter mile southeast of the WSA boundary (T. 6 S., R. 32 E., NE1/4 of section 14 and NW1/4 section 13). There were no mining claims in the WSA in 1987.

2. Summary of significant new mineral resource data collected since the suitability recommendation which should be considered in the final recommendation: No U.S. Geologic Survey (USGS) or U.S. Bureau of Mines (BOM) mineral surveys were conducted in this WSA. No new data has been generated since the EIS of 1987. BLM records indicate that there are no mining claims in the WSA as of March 25, 1988.

E. Impacts on Resources

The following table summarizes the effects on pertinent resource alternatives considered including designation or non-designation of the entire area as wilderness. (For a full explanation of this summary, refer to the Benton-Owens Valley/Bodie-Coleville Wilderness - Final Environmental Impact Statement.)



NONE

Recommended for Wilderness

Recommended for Non Wilderness

Recommended for Non Wilderness

Land outside WSA Recommended for Wilderness

Land outside WSA Recommended for Wilderness

Split Estate

Split Estate

State

State

Private

Private

Explanation

High Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals

High Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals

Moderate Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals

Moderate Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals

M

Moderate Mineral Potential Location in a High Mineral Potential Area

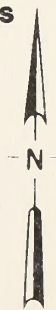
H

High Mineral Potential Location in a Moderate Mineral Potential Area

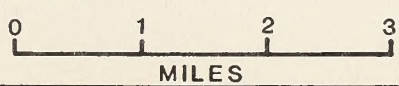
Commodity Symbols

G Geothermal

N Non-metallic



Volcanic Tableland Mineral Resource Potential



Map-2
010-081

Table 4 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	PARTIAL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Wilderness Values	<p>The primary impacts on wilderness values would originate from mining activities in the southeast portion of the WSA and development of the 6 miles of transmission-line corridor along the western boundary. The perception of naturalness would be impaired over 2,960 acres with a direct loss of naturalness on 5 acres. Solitude within the WSA would be diminished within an area of 600 acres as a result of mining activities with additional short-term disruptions within a 2,500-acre area along the transmission-line corridor during powerline construction activities. Projected motorized recreation use and livestock grazing activities would result in slight to minor impacts to wilderness values. Habitat for pronghorn antelope would not be noticeably impacted. Primitive and unconfined recreation opportunities would be slightly impacted on a localized basis as a result of continued motorized recreation use, development of the 6 miles of transmission-line corridor, and the 5-acre quarry for decorative building stone. There would be no adverse impacts on the pronghorn antelope habitat.</p>	<p>Wilderness designation would retain and slightly enhance wilderness values by eliminating motorized vehicle use (300 visitor-days) as well as precluding mining for decorative building stone and development of the transmission line corridor within the WSA along the western boundary. Proposed livestock projects would result in slight to minor, localized impacts to wilderness values. Habitat for reintroduced pronghorn antelope would be slightly enhanced.</p>	<p>Wilderness values would be retained and slightly enhanced within the 10,920 acres of the WSA designated wilderness. Motorized recreation use and mining activities for decorative building stone would be eliminated, benefiting wilderness values. Proposed livestock projects would result in slight to minor localized impacts to wilderness values.</p> <p>Within the 1,579 acres not designated as wilderness, development of the transmission line corridor along the western boundary of the WSA would impair the perception of naturalness over a 2,500-acre area with additional short-term disruptions to solitude as a result of construction activities.</p> <p>Habitat for reintroduced pronghorn antelope would be slightly enhanced except for minor disruptions of use as a result of construction activities within the transmission line corridor.</p>

Table 4 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative (cont.)

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	PARTIAL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Motorized Recreation Use*	There would be no impacts on motorized recreation use which is anticipated to increase slowly from the existing 300 visitor-days to a total of 500 visitor-days.	Motorized recreation use would be prohibited and 300 visitor-days would be foregone within the WSA. Due to the projected low level of use within the WSA and the availability of opportunities on public lands outside the WSA, there would be a minor impact on motorized recreation use.*	Motorized recreation use would be prohibited and 300 visitor-days would be foregone within the designated portion of the WSA which amounts to over 87% of the WSA. No motorized recreation use is anticipated on the one-quarter mile of existing primitive vehicle route within the remainder of the WSA not designated wilderness. Overall there would be a minor impact on motorized recreation use.*
Transmission-Line Corridor Development	There would be no impact on development of the one-half-mile-wide transmission-line corridor. The one-quarter-mile width within the WSA would be available for use along 6 miles of the western boundary.	There would be a minor impact on development of the transmission line corridor. Wilderness designation would preclude use of one-quarter mile of the one-half-mile-wide corridor. The remaining one-quarter-mile width is outside the WSA and would be available for use. However, the available corridor width outside the WSA would limit the opportunity for multiple transmission-line development which could lead to moderate adverse impacts on the development of the transmission line corridor.	There would be no impact on development of the one-half-mile-wide transmission-line corridor. The one-quarter-mile width of the corridor within the WSA along 6 miles of the west boundary would be in the portion not designated as wilderness.

*Since this impact was identified in the Benton-Owens Valley/Bodie-Coleville Final EIS, it has been determined that prohibition of motorized vehicle use as well as mechanized vehicles such as mountain bikes under this alternative would have greater (moderate) impacts than originally anticipated. The lack of snow-free areas during the winter use months as well as the potential for other local vehicle use restrictions outside the unit contribute to this reassessment of adverse impacts.

Table 4 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative (cont.)

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	PARTIAL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Mining of Decorative Building Stone	There would be no impact on the mining of decorative building stone. Mineral sales would be permitted. A 5-acre quarry for Bishop tuff is projected for the WSA.	Mining of decorative building stone, including a projected 5-acre quarry for Bishop tuff would be prohibited. There would be only a minor impact as Bishop tuff is available in areas outside the WSA.	There would be a minor impact on mining of decorative building stone within the 10,920 acres of the WSA designated wilderness. Wilderness designation would prohibit mineral sales including a projected 5-acre quarry for Bishop tuff. Within the 1,579 acres not designated wilderness mineral sales would be permitted. However, no mining of decorative building stone is anticipated. There would be no impact.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

During the inventory phase, a few comments were received addressing the negative influences of the boundary transmission line on the WSA's opportunities for solitude and the potential need for expansion of the utility line corridor.

After the inventory, comments were received during the wilderness study process. One comment noted the WSA's opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined types of recreation while another noted that the boundary transmission line is a visual intrusion. One respondent noted the possibility of metallic minerals in the WSA, and thus, requested the area be dropped from wilderness consideration.

During the study phase, a public meeting and public hearing were held in association with the draft environmental impact statement for the WSAs within the EIS area. The public meeting was held in Markleeville, California, and the public hearing in Bishop, California. Comments were received both orally through the hearing, and in writing during the 90-day public review period. A total of 83 written and oral comments were received. Thirty-three comments supported the Bureau's no-wilderness recommendation. Forty-two comments supported the all-wilderness alternative, and eight comments supported the partial-wilderness alternative.

Although no Federal agency comments were received specific to this WSA, the Department of Energy, Western Area Power Administration, submitted a general written comment requesting the Bureau provide transmission-line corridor space for future construction of transmission lines on public lands.

No State agency comments were received specific to this WSA.

The Inyo County Board of Supervisors has passed a resolution opposing any additional wilderness areas in Inyo County. No comments specific to the Mono County portion of the Volcanic Tableland WSA were received from Mono County.

Casa Diablo

CA-010-082

CASA DIABLO WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CA-010-082)

1. THE STUDY AREA ---

8,959 acres

The Casa Diablo WSA is located in southern Mono County, approximately 12 miles north of Bishop, California. The WSA includes 5,325 acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land, 3,634 acres of United States Forest Service (USFS) land, and no State land or private inholdings (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The northern boundary follows a maintained road to the east, then travels south along a 750-kV electric transmission line right-of-way skirting around a small portion of nonpublic land. The boundary intersects Casa Diablo County Road and follows this road in a northwesterly direction. As the boundary nears Casa Diablo Mountain it jogs around nonpublic land where it connects with the improved northern boundary road.

The WSA is located along the western edge of the Basin and Range geomorphic province. Elevation ranges from 5,400 feet to 7,912 feet. The landscape is dominated by Casa Diablo Mountain (7,912 feet). Casa Diablo (Spanish for "House of the Devil") is an island of older granitic rock rising through lithified volcanic ash. The mountain lies in the western portion of the WSA while the remainder of the unit is typified by volcanic terraces in the south, and rocky and rugged hills in the north-central section. Numerous canyons and sandy washes are located in the unit. Vegetation in the WSA consists of Great Basin shrubs with pinyon trees occupying the upland slopes.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Various suitability recommendations were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) for the Benton-Owens Valley/Bodie-Coleville Wilderness Study Areas. A summary of the area's wilderness values was included in the Final EIS. Two different suitability recommendations were analyzed in the EISs: all wilderness and no wilderness.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE ---

0 acres recommended
for wilderness
8,959 BLM and USFS acres
recommended for
nonwilderness

No wilderness is the recommendation for this WSA. The entire acreage in this WSA is released for uses other than wilderness.

The all-wilderness alternative is considered to be the environmentally preferred alternative as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The no-wilderness alternative will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The WSA is recommended nonsuitable because of its potential for mineral and geothermal occurrence, and future transmission line expansion needs outweigh the area's wilderness values. Naturalness has been adversely affected in a portion of the unit. In addition, manageability was an important consideration in the nonsuitable recommendation.

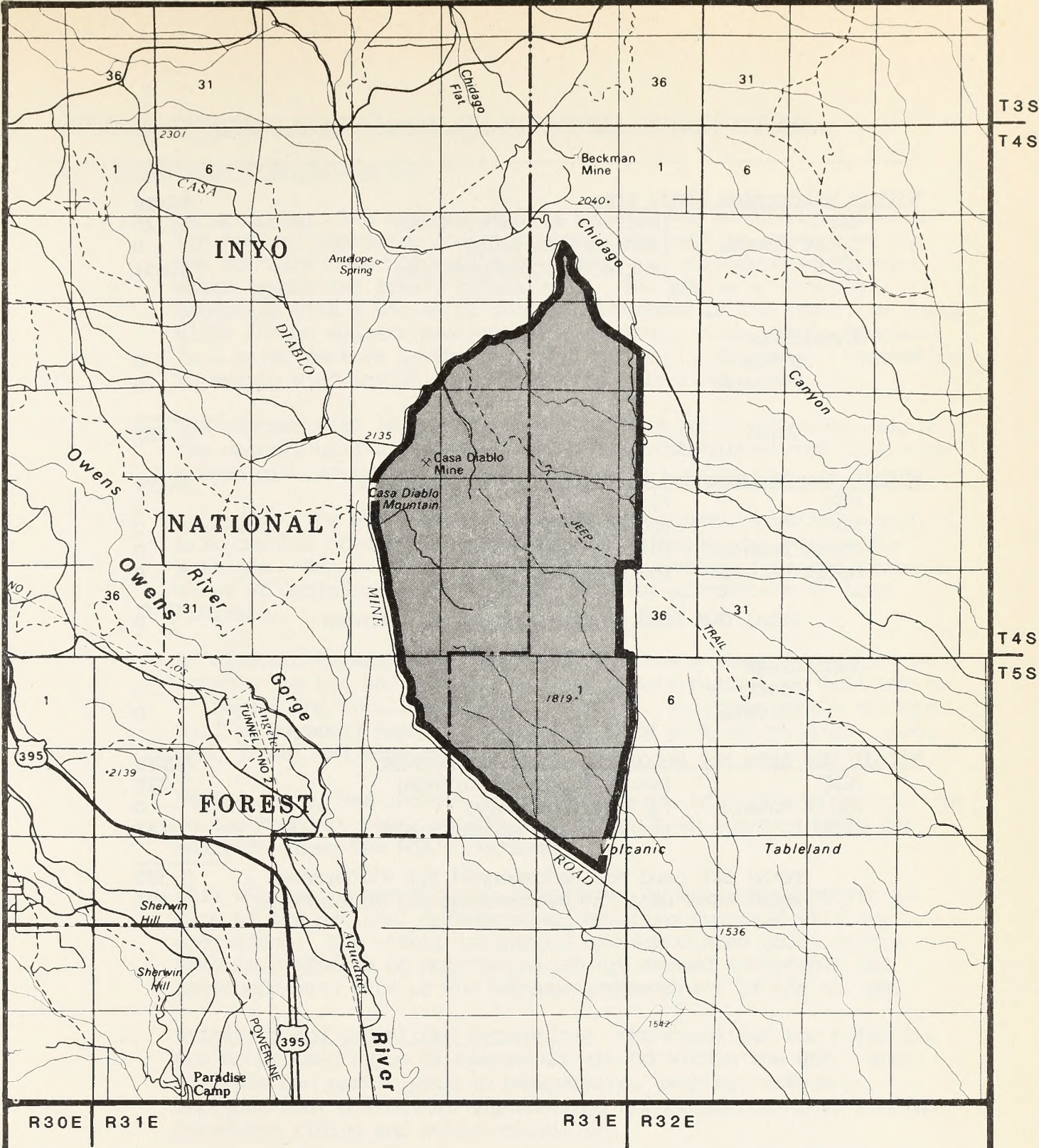
Man-made visual influences outside the WSA such as a 750-kV electric transmission line along the eastern boundary and periodic vehicle use on the boundary roads surrounding the WSA may affect solitude. Some portions of the WSA allow unobstructed views of the transmission line up to a distance of 1-1/2 miles. In addition, the USFS portion of the unit contains mining scars around Casa Diablo Mountain. These mining imprints severely impair the area's naturalness and opportunities for solitude.

Resource conflicts in the WSA include moderate potential for metallic minerals in the BLM portion of the unit, high potential for metallic minerals in the USFS portion, and moderate potential for geothermal. Mineral potential for silver and gold is high on Casa Diablo Mountain. There are numerous silver and gold mining claims in the USFS portion of the unit.


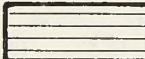

The Benton-Owens Valley Management Framework Plan prescribes a half-mile wide utility line corridor along five miles of the eastern boundary. This corridor lies in the WSA one-quarter mile west of the present transmission-line boundary. There is a high current demand to use this corridor. Most recently, Oxbow Geothermal Corporation demonstrated a need to utilize this corridor for construction of an electric transmission line. Additionally, several utility/energy organizations have expressed support to accommodate future use in this corridor.

The WSA sustains and provides suitable opportunities for motorized recreational use. Approximately eight miles of primitive vehicle routes are located in the unit. These routes are used by off-highway vehicle recreationists, horseback riders, hunters, sightseers, etc. It is expected that demand and use of this area for motorized recreational activities will remain stable.

The potential determination of valid existing rights related to mining claims in areas of moderate to high mineral value would make affected portions of the WSA impossible to manage as wilderness. Development of mining claims which are found to have valid existing rights could impair the area's wilderness values with or without wilderness designation. The WSA's lack of natural barriers along the eastern boundary presents some additional limitations to effective wilderness management.



- | | | |
|---|------|---|
|  | NONE | RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |
|  | | RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS |
|  | | LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |

- | | |
|---|--------------|
|  | SPLIT ESTATE |
|  | STATE |
|  | PRIVATE |

**Casa Diablo Mountain
Proposal
MAP-1**

0 1 2 3
MILES

010-082
JUNE, 1988

TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	5,325
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
USFS	(surface and subsurface)	3,634
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
Total		<u>8,959</u>
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Study Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<u>0</u>
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	5,325
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
USFS	(surface and subsurface) ¹	3,634
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>5,325</u>
Total USFS Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>3,634</u>

¹The USFS has agreed to allow these lands, located in the Inyo National Forest, to be reported as part of BLM's WSR. When Congress acts, the lands will be managed in accordance with the current appraisal management plan.

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The eastern half of the WSA has generally retained its natural character and influence. The western portion of the WSA contains numerous mining prospects and surface disturbances which impair the area's naturalness. The WSA is a variable landscape with a series of volcanic terraces in the south, to rocky hills in the western and northern portions. Casa Diablo Mountain is a major feature in the northern section of the area. Vegetation is evenly distributed throughout this transition area.

The eastern side is dominated by shadscale scrub and dalea, while the western upland areas are a big sagebrush-bitterbrush type with pinyon pine trees on the higher slopes.

2. Solitude: The WSA's highly variable topography, vegetation and size combine together to provide outstanding opportunities for solitude. The unit's physical character and spaciousness impart a sense of isolation and unconfined freedom of movement to area visitors.

An electric transmission line parallels the eastern boundary just outside the WSA and visually affects opportunities for solitude on a limited and localized basis. Visually, solitude in the western half is severely impaired by mining scars such as tailings, waste rock sites, and mine shafts.

Additionally, the outside sights and sounds of periodic vehicle use on the boundary roads would slightly diminish opportunities for solitude along the WSA's borders.

This WSA may be overflowed in the future by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission during approved military operations. The visual intrusions and associated noise create temporary effects on solitude which are deemed acceptable and necessary as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and unconfined recreation: Opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation abound within the WSA. Area visitors can participate in backpacking, camping, nature appreciation, historical sightseeing, scenic photography, hunting, horseback riding and other activities.
4. Special features: The major special feature of this WSA is crucial winter habitat for mule deer. The mule deer rely on the unit's topographical relief for protective cover during winter months.

B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS)

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 8,959 acres of the Intermountain Sagebrush/Great Basin Sagebrush ecosystem. The Casa Diablo WSA would not increase the diversity of the types of ecosystems represented in the NWPS.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush/ Great Basin Sagebrush	1	32,407	55	1,199,950
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush/ Great Basin Sagebrush	0	0	19	215,484

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of four major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3 - Wilderness Opportunities for Residents of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>California</u>				
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Los Angeles/Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
Riverside/San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
<u>Nevada</u>				
Reno	39	4,647,230	170	6,904,809

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA is within 50 air miles of one BLM WSA recommended for wilderness designation. The John Muir and the Ansel Adams Wilderness, 12 and 26 miles to the west, respectively, are the nearest designated wilderness areas. These wilderness areas are administered by the Inyo National Forest. Other nearby designated wilderness areas include Yosemite and Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Parks which are managed by the National Park Service and the Hoover Wilderness which is managed by the Toiyabe and Inyo National Forests.

C. Manageability

The Casa Diablo WSA is manageable as wilderness, but only with difficulty. Effective management as wilderness may be altogether impossible due to the potential for development of valid existing rights on mining claims in areas with moderate to high potential for metallic minerals. The probability for determination of valid existing rights is moderate to high. In addition, the area's lack of natural barriers along the eastern boundary to prevent off-highway vehicle use hinders management of this unit as wilderness.

Some signing, some fencing and occasional patrolling would be required to insure the integrity of the area's wilderness values.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of information known at the time of the preliminary suitability recommendation: The Casa Diablo WSA is in the BLM Casa Diablo Geology-Energy-Minerals (G-E-M) Resource Area (GRA). BLM G-E-M data in the Affected Environment section of the Benton-Owens Valley/ Bodie-Coleville Study Areas Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in 1987 indicated that the Casa Diablo WSA had moderate metallic mineral occurrence potential, no occurrence potential for oil and gas and very low occurrence potential for uranium and thorium. There is low occurrence potential for non-metallic minerals and moderate occurrence potential for geothermal resources. Mineral occurrence potential for silver and gold is high on Casa Diablo Mountain (adjacent USFS land).

Information contained in the 1983 G-E-M report indicates that the area around Casa Diablo Mountain has high potential for silver and gold. The G-E-M report indicates that the Casa Diablo mine (Sec. 21, T. 4 S., R. 31 E.) has produced over \$100,000 in gold, silver, and base metals production. This mineralization was from granitic rocks with quartz veins. The intrusive rocks and metasediments of the WSA are identified in the G-E-M report as suitable host rocks for metallic minerals. Casa Diablo Mountain has surface disturbances related to mining activities totaling 350

acres. The disturbed areas include tailings, waste rock sites, and mine shafts. Approximately thirty mining claims existed on Casa Diablo Mountain. Two unpatented mining claims also occurred in the center of the WSA on the USFS and BLM boundary.

All areas of the WSA were classified as being prospectively valuable for geothermal resources by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) in 1985 ("Lands Valuable for Geothermal Resources," unpublished map, July 1985 revision). The entire WSA is on the eastern edge of the Long Valley Cauldera. This nearby heat source together with the presence of numerous faults for migration of hot water provide a moderately favorable environment for geothermal resources. There were no oil and gas, geothermal, or sodium or potassium leases in the WSA.

The Casa Diablo WSA has low non-metallic resource potential.

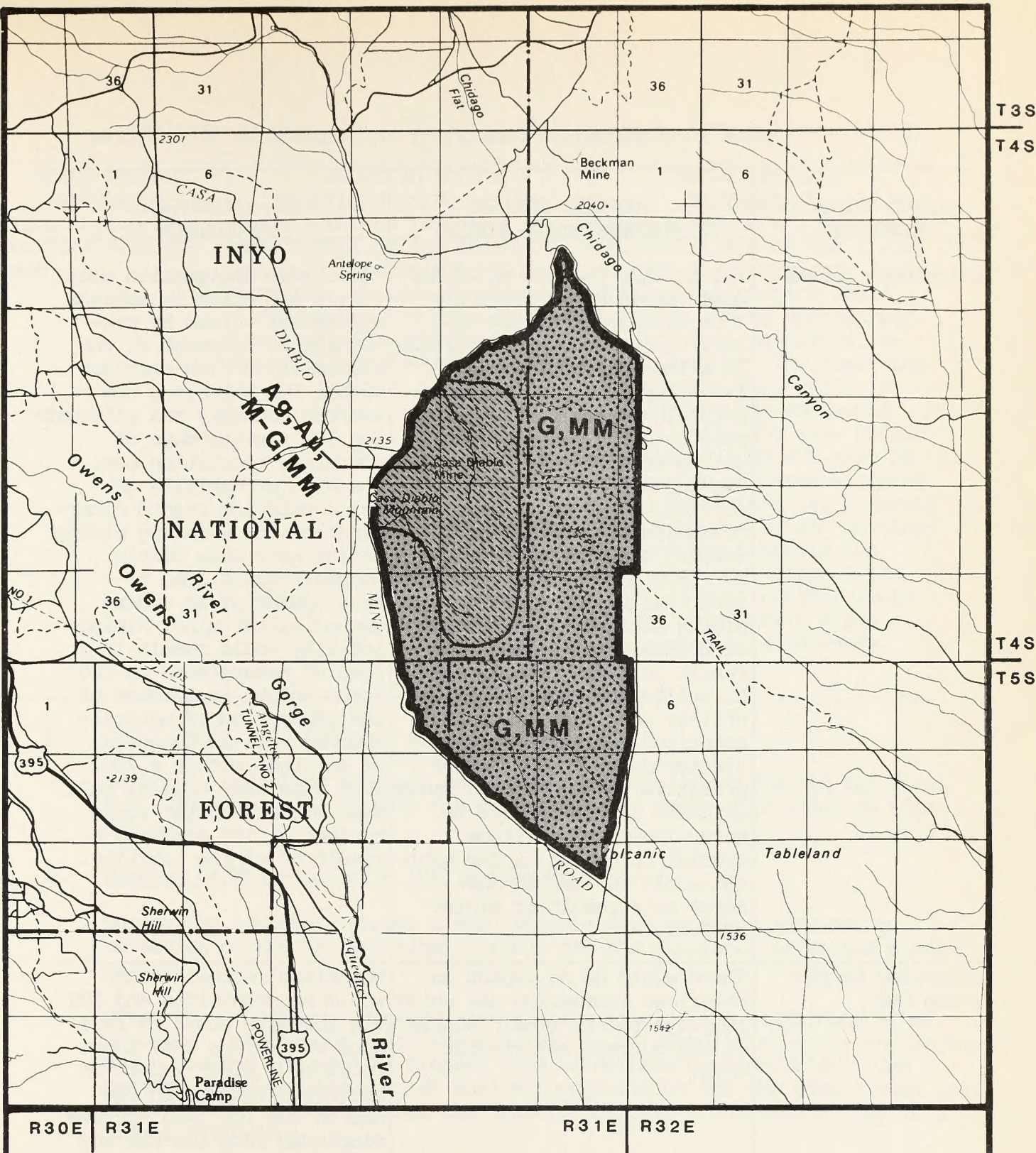
2. Summary of significant new mineral data collected since the suitability recommendation which should be considered in the final recommendation: No USGS or BOM mineral surveys were conducted in this WSA. A check of the January 13, 1988 BLM mining claim microfiche indicates that there are 36 lode mining claims in the WSA west of the USFS boundary (Table 4). This is an increase of five claims since the EIS was done in 1987. These claims occupy 720 acres of the WSA.

Table 4 - Mining Claims

TYPE	NO.			ACRES		
	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL
Mining Claims						
Lode	0	36	36	0	720	720
Placer	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mill Sites	0	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Total</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>36</u>	<u>36</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>720</u>	<u>720</u>

E. Impacts on Resources

The following table summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for all alternatives considered including designation or nondesignation of the entire area as wilderness. (For a full explanation of this summary, refer to the Benton-Owens Valley/Bodie-Coleville Wilderness - Final Environmental Impact Statement.)



NONE

Recommended for
Wilderness



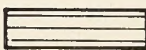
Recommended for
Non Wilderness



Land outside WSA
Recommended for
Wilderness



Split Estate



State



Private

Explanation



High Potential for the
Occurrence of Energy and/or
Non-energy Minerals



Moderate Potential for the
Occurrence of Energy and/or
Non-energy Minerals

M

Moderate Mineral Potential
Location in a High Mineral
Potential Area

H

High Mineral Potential
Location in a Moderate Mineral
Potential Area

Commodity Symbols

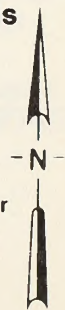
Ag Silver

Au Gold

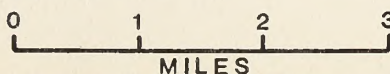
G Geothermal

MM Metallic

Minerals other
than Ag & Au



**Casa Diablo Mountain
Mineral Resource Potential**



**Map-2
010-082**

Table 5 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Wilderness Values	<p>The primary impacts on wilderness values would originate from mining activities near Casa Diablo Mountain resulting in a loss of naturalness on 120 acres. The perception of naturalness would be impaired over 2,400 acres as a result of the mining activities and development of the utility corridor for high voltage transmission lines along the eastern border. Solitude would be diminished within a 700-acre area surrounding the mining activity. Construction of transmission lines would result in short-term impacts to solitude along the 5-mile utility corridor. Continued motorized recreation use (300 visitor-days) on 8 miles of primitive vehicle routes would maintain slight impacts to naturalness and solitude. Crucial mule deer winter habitat would be lost on 120 acres as a result of mining activity.</p>	<p>Wilderness designation would retain and slightly enhance wilderness values by precluding development of the transmission-line corridor within the WSA along the eastern boundary and eliminating 300 visitor-days of motorized recreation use. The high probability of valid existing rights determination for existing mining claims near Casa Diablo Mountain would lead to development of an underground silver mine. Mining activity would result in a loss of naturalness on 120 acres and an impairment of the perception of naturalness as well as the sense of solitude within a 700-acre viewshed. Crucial mule deer winter habitat would be lost on 120 acres as a result of mining activity.</p>
Motorized Recreation Use	<p>There would be no impact on motorized recreation use which is projected to remain stable at the current 300 visitor days.</p>	<p>Motorized recreation use would be prohibited and 300 visitor-days would be foregone within the WSA. There would be a minor impact on motorized recreation use due to the low level of use displaced from the WSA and the availability of opportunities on public lands outside the WSA.</p>

Table 5 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative (Cont'd)

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Transmission-Line Corridor Develop- ment	There would be no impact on development of the one-half-mile-wide transmission line corridor. The one-quarter-mile width within the WSA would be available for use along 5 miles of the eastern boundary.	There would be a minor impact on development of the transmission line corridor. Wilderness designation would preclude use of one-quarter mile of the one-half-mile-wide corridor. The remaining one-quarter mile width is outside the WSA and would be available for use. Should the Fish Slough WSA also be designated wilderness, there would be a potential moderate impact to the future development of the transmission line corridor, since 2 1/2 miles of the corridor would be entirely within areas designated as wilderness.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local, social or economic considerations were identified in the Final EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

During the inventory phase, a few comments were received addressing expansion of the utility line corridor and the existence of unique wildlife values.

After the inventory, comments were received during the wilderness study process. One comment noted the possibility of metallic minerals in the WSA and requested the area be dropped from wilderness consideration. One comment noted the groundwater aquifer capabilities for the Fish Slough area while another indicated that the eastern boundary transmission-line is a visual intrusion.

During the study phase, a public meeting and public hearing were held in association with the draft environmental impact statement for the WSAs within the EIS area. The public meeting was held in Markleeville, California, and the public hearing in Bishop, California. Comments were received both orally through the hearing, and in writing during the 90-day public review period. A total of 82 written and oral comments were

received. Thirty-two comments supported the Bureau's no-wilderness recommendation. Forty-two comments supported the all-wilderness alternative, and eight comments supported a partial-wilderness alternative.

Although no Federal agency comments were received specific to this WSA, the Department of Energy, Western Area Power Administration, submitted a general written comment requesting the Bureau to provide transmission-line corridor space for future construction of transmission lines on public lands.

No State or County agency comments were received specific to this WSA.

Excelsior

CA-010-088

EXCELSIOR WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CA-010-088)

1. THE STUDY AREA ---

9,383 acres

The Excelsior WSA is located in east-central Mono County, approximately 24 miles northeast of Lee Vining, California. The WSA includes 9,383 acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands. There are neither State lands nor private inholdings in the WSA (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The northern boundary of the WSA follows a 60-kV powerline right-of-way northeast along State Highway 167, then follows the Toiyabe National Forest (USFS) boundary east to the Mono County line. The boundary proceeds southeast until it meets a 750-kV powerline right-of-way. The boundary then turns south along the Inyo National Forest boundary and around private land. The WSA boundary turns west at Deep Wells Road until it meets Dobie Meadows Road. The boundary follows this road northwest, skirting around a few private land portions, until it intersects the 60-kV powerline right-of-way along State Highway 167.

The WSA is located along the western edge of the Basin and Range geomorphic province and occupies the northeast corner of Mono Basin, a gentle southwest-sloping valley consisting of fill deposits from ancient Lake Russell. These surface fill deposits are composed of fine grained silt and sand with interbedded sand and gravel material. The landscape is uniform in character except for some small volcanic bluffs in the southeast corner of the WSA. As a result, the WSA terrain features are subdued and visually bland. Elevation ranges from 6,800 to 7,000 feet. The vegetation consists of Great Basin shrubs with some stands of pinyon pine and Utah juniper.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Various suitability recommendations were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) for the Benton-Owens Valley/Bodie-Coleville Wilderness Study Areas. A summary of the area's wilderness values was included in the Final EIS. Two different suitability recommendations were analyzed in the EIS: all wilderness and no wilderness.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE ---

0 acres recommended
for wilderness
9,383 BLM acres recommended
for non-wilderness

No wilderness is the recommendation for this WSA. The entire acreage in this WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. The all-wilderness alternative is considered to be the environmentally preferred alternative as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long term.

The no wilderness alternative will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

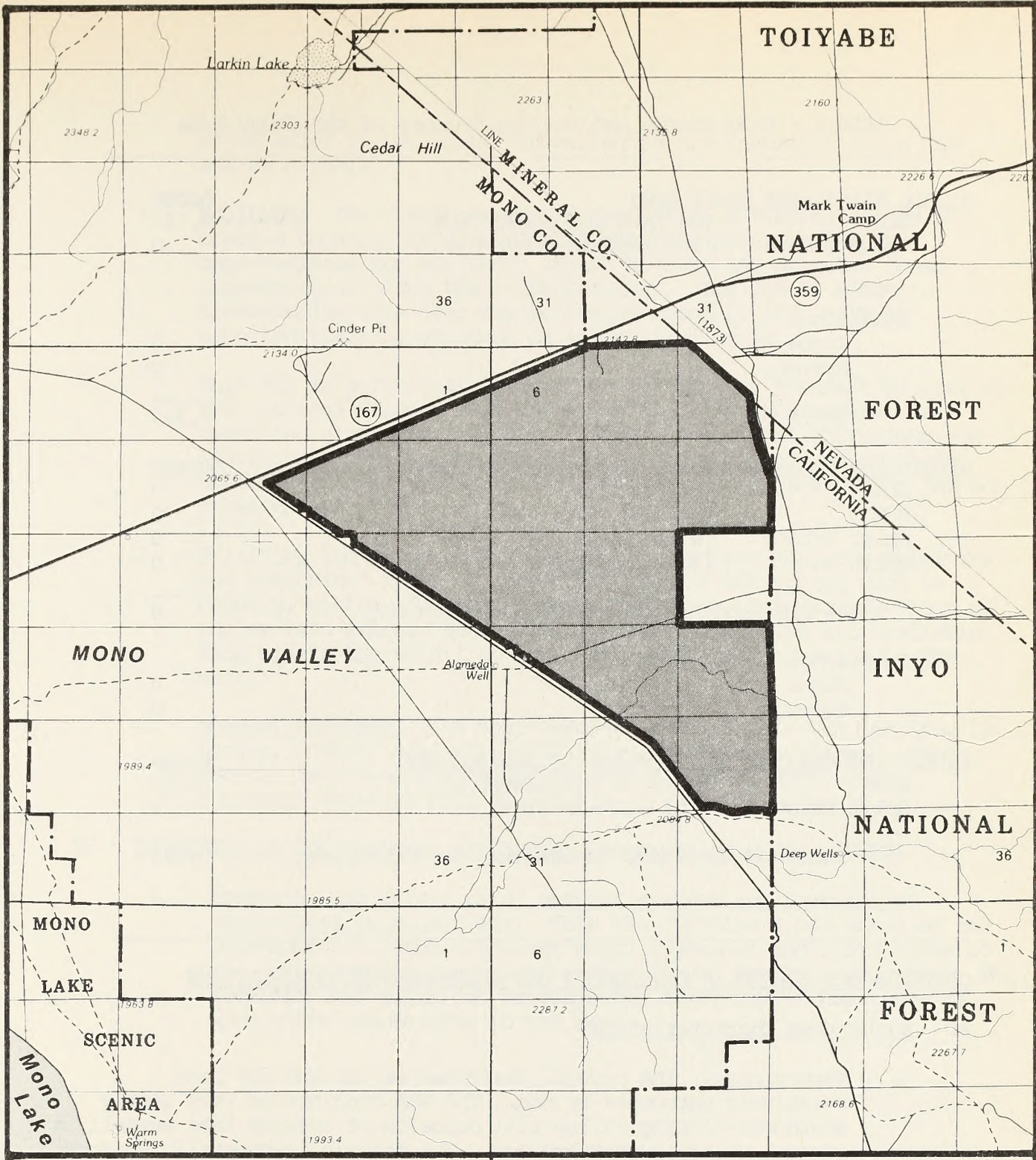
The WSA is recommended nonsuitable because its potential for mineral occurrence outweighs the area's marginal wilderness values. Within this WSA, wilderness values are considered low due to the lack of significant wilderness features or characteristics unique to the region. In addition, manageability was a consideration in the nonsuitable recommendation.

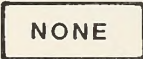


Solitude is somewhat affected visually by vehicle use occurring on State Highway 167 which lies along the WSA's north boundary. Additionally, the 750-KV electric transmission line in the northeast corner of the unit visually limits opportunities for solitude locally.




Resource conflicts in the WSA include moderate potential for geothermal resources. Some geothermal exploration has occurred within three miles of the WSA in the Mono-Long Valley Known Geothermal Resource Area.

The WSA reflects an environment that is bleak and visually monotonous. It portrays a topography and vegetation that is displayed throughout most of Mono Basin. The WSA's vegetative patterns, forms, and textures blend together into a monotonous landform cover. The pinyon-juniper associations provide some visual contrast. The lack of significant or unique wilderness values renders this WSA to a low level of wilderness quality. As a result, this WSA would provide little or no significant enhancement to the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS).

The WSA's relatively flat, broad topography renders it vulnerable to vehicle encroachment. The lack of natural barriers along the unit's boundaries would make it difficult to manage as wilderness. There are approximately four miles of routes of travel which will remain available for vehicular use.



- | | | |
|---|---|----------------------------|
|  | NONE | RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS | |
|  | LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS | |

- | | |
|---|--------------|
|  | SPLIT ESTATE |
|  | STATE |
|  | PRIVATE |



**Excelsior
Proposal
MAP-1**



010-088
JUNE, 1988

TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	9,383
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
Total		9,383
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Study Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	9,383
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		9,383

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The natural character of the WSA has been relatively untouched by man. The WSA consists of very gently southwest-sloping valley fill deposits of ancient Lake Russell, a remnant of the Quaternary age. The terrain is generally uniform. Some small volcanic bluffs are located in the WSA's southeast corner. One-half of the WSA consists of big sagebrush-Indian ricegrass vegetation. In the northeast corner is a large juniper stand with a sagebrush understory.

In the southeast corner, two hills support stands of pinyon-juniper with understories of big sagebrush and bitterbrush. A few primitive vehicle routes totaling about four

miles exist in the unit. These routes are unnoticeable in the WSA as a whole.

2. Solitude: The spaciousness and vegetative screening of the WSA combine together to provide area visitors with outstanding opportunities for solitude. State Highway 167 degrades these opportunities along the north boundary. The 750-KV electric transmission line near the northeast boundary also affects opportunities for solitude on a localized basis.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and unconfined recreation: Opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation include activities such as camping, hiking, hunting, horseback riding, etc. Scenic views of the eastern Sierra, Mono Lake, and the Bodie Hills are available from within the unit. No permanent water sources exist in the unit.
4. Special features: The major special feature this WSA contains is spring, summer, and fall habitat for pronghorn antelope. This habitat is a good ecological representation of Great Basin pronghorn antelope habitat.

B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS)

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 8,069 acres of the Intermountain Sagebrush/Great Basin Sagebrush and 1,314 acres of the intermountain Sagebrush/Juniper-Pinyon Woodland ecosystem. The Excelsior WSA would not increase the diversity of the types of ecosystems represented in the NWPS.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	NWPS Areas		Other BIM Studies	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush/ Great Basin Sagebrush	1	32,407	55	1,197,206
Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	4	81,301	74	2,149,989
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush/ Great Basin Sagebrush	0	0	19	212,740
Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	3	61,701	18	364,519

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five hour drive of six major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BIM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3 - Wilderness Opportunities for Residents of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	NWPS Areas		Other BIM Studies	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>California</u>				
Fresno	35	4,048,852	28	460,790
Merced	33	3,957,550	25	348,753
Modesto	36	4,126,963	81	1,722,326
Sacramento	46	5,001,817	87	2,479,541
Stockton	35	4,061,833	46	601,496
<u>Nevada</u>				
Reno	39	4,647,230	170	6,904,809

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA is within 50 air miles of one BIM WSA recommended for wilderness designation. Yosemite National Park, administered by the National Park Service and the Hoover Wilderness, administered by the Toiyabe and the Inyo National Forests are located approximately 30 miles west of the WSA. These are the nearest designated wilderness areas. Other nearby designated wilderness areas include the Ansel Adams Wilderness which is managed by the Inyo National Forest.

C. Manageability

The Excelsior WSA is manageable as wilderness, but with some difficulty. A lack of natural barriers along the WSA's boundary makes it vulnerable to indiscriminate OHV use. Frequent signing, fencing most of the border, and intensive patrolling would be required to insure the integrity of the unit. The gentle terrain and low vegetation are susceptible to four-wheel drive use and other types of off road vehicles.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of information known at the time of the preliminary suitability recommendation: The Excelsior WSA is within the BLM Mono Geology-Energy Minerals (G-E-M) Resource Area (GRA). The G-E-M data in the Affected Environment section of the 1987 BLM Wilderness Recommendations, Benton-Owens Valley/Bodie-Coleville Study Areas Final EIS, indicates that the WSA has a moderate potential for occurrence of geothermal resources. As of the spring of 1986, BLM records indicated that no unpatented mining claims were located within the WSA.

The G-E-M report for the Mono GRA does not specifically analyze the Excelsior WSA, however, it discusses the area in general terms. The WSA lies only three miles northeast of the Mono-Long Valley Known Geothermal Resource Area (KGRA). It is also entirely within the area classified as prospectively valuable for geothermal resources ("Lands Valuable for Geothermal Resources", USGS unpublished map revised July, 1985). Numerous springs occur in the area with temperatures of 36° C and 86° C. These temperatures are high enough for direct use applications. The area is the site of active volcanism. The presence of this magmatic heat source in combination with the highly faulted nature of the area (allowing migration of heated fluids) gives this area its moderate potential for geothermal resources using the BLM mineral resource classification scheme (see accompanying mineral potential map). A competitive geothermal lease sale was held on parcels within the KGRA in September, 1982. Bids were received, however, the amounts were nominal and the leases were not issued. No exploration activity was known to have occurred within the WSA.

The entire WSA was covered by oil and gas prospecting permits during the 1920s and 1930s but no leases were ever issued. A prospecting permit was issued for potassium in 1967.

2. Summary of significant new mineral data collected since the suitability recommendation which should be considered in the final recommendation: Because the WSA was recommended

nonsuitable by BLM, no U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) or U.S. Bureau of Mines (BOM) mineral surveys were conducted for this WSA. As of May, 1988, BLM records dated March 25, 1988, indicate no unpatented mining claims, mineral leases, or mineral material sale contracts/permits within the WSA. No new information concerning this WSA has been generated since May 4, 1988.

E. Impacts on Resources

The following table summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for all alternatives considered including designation or nondesignation of the entire area as wilderness. (For a full explanation of this summary, refer to the Benton-Owens Valley/Bodie-Coleville Wilderness - Final Environmental Impact Statement.)

Table 4 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Wilderness Values	On an overall basis there would be a minor impact on wilderness values within the 9,383-acre Excelsior WSA. Impacts in the western portion of the WSA from geothermal development would result in a direct loss of naturalness on up to 2,000 acres. Continued low levels of motorized recreation use, fuelwood harvesting and construction and maintenance of the livestock water development and the wildlife rain collection storage basin would result in negligible to minor local impacts. Opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation would be limited in the WSA as a result of geothermal development and continued motorized recreation use. The pronghorn antelope habitat as a special feature of the WSA, would be limited on 40 acres due to geothermal development; however, it would benefit from the rain collection storage basin and the livestock water development.	Overall, the management actions under the All Wilderness Alternative would result in a slight to minor enhancement of the long-term protection of wilderness values. Closure of the WSA to motorized recreation use, prohibition of geothermal exploration and eliminating fuelwood harvesting would result in minor benefits to wilderness values. Proposed wildlife improvements including maintenance would have slight adverse impacts on localized naturalness and solitude. There would be a slight benefit to the WSA's pronghorn antelope habitat.

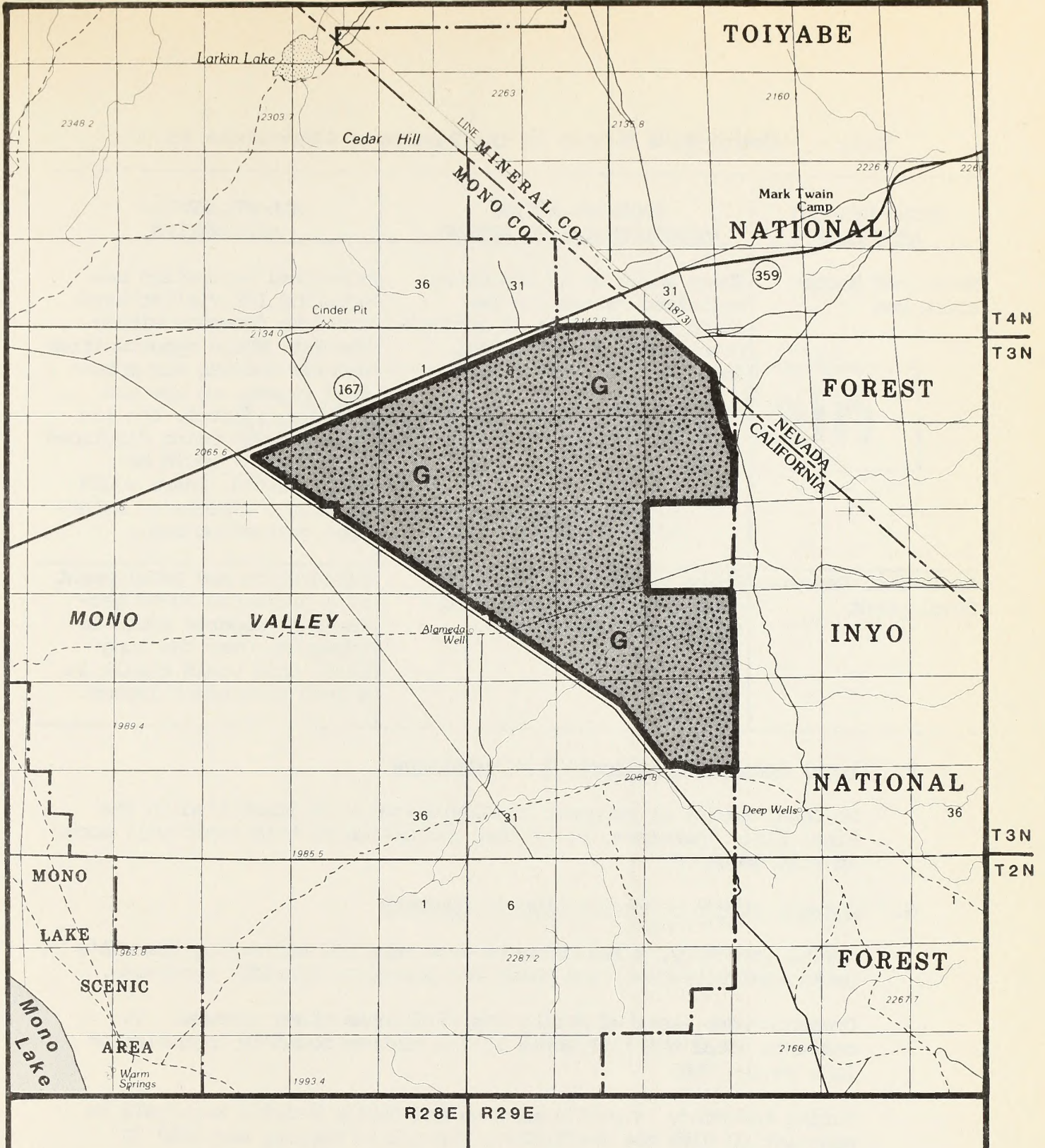


Table 4 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative (Cont'd)

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Motorized Recreation Use	There would be no impact on motorized recreation use which would remain at approximately the current annual level of 100 visitor days.	Motorized recreation use totaling 100 visitor days would be foregone within the WSA. While opportunities outside the WSA for motorized recreation use are somewhat limited, the low level of use being displaced from the WSA would be accommodated. There would be slight impacts on motorized recreation use.
Geothermal Resource Development	There would be no impact on geothermal exploration and development in the WSA.	Exploration and development of a projected 50-Mw geothermal resource would be foregone. Over the long-term, this would result in a less than minor impact.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

During inventory, a few comments were received addressing the WSA's geothermal potential, and needs for powerline corridor expansion.

Comments were received during the wilderness study process. Two comments noted the influences of the eastern boundary transmission line on the WSA.

During the study, a public meeting and public hearing were held in association with the draft EIS. The public meeting was held in Markleeville, California, and the public hearing in Bishop, California. A total of 83 written and oral comments were received. Forty comments supported the Bureau's recommendation. Forty-three comments supported the all-wilderness alternative.

During the inventory, Mono County provided a comment pertaining to the area's wilderness values. No other agency comments were received.

Granite Mountain

CA-010-090

GRANITE MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CA-010-090)

1. THE STUDY AREA --- 58,238 acres

The Granite Mountain WSA is located in east-central Mono County, approximately 17 miles west of Benton, California. The WSA includes 54,178 acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land, 3,867 acres of Inyo National Forest Land (USFS), and 193 acres of private inholdings. No State land is located in the unit (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The northern boundary of the WSA begins at the Mono Lake Scenic Area and proceeds easterly along a ranching road. It bypasses a cherry-stemmed windmill and some private land prior to intersecting the Dobie Meadows/Deep Wells county road. The boundary turns south and follows the road, skirting a cherry-stemmed windmill, some private land, and a primitive vehicle route. At State Highway 120, the boundary turns southwest. A review of the WSA map shows this southern extremity of the WSA as an irregular, convoluted boundary feature that follows or bypasses ranching roads, a material site right-of-way, cherry-stemmed wells and spring developments, and the Inyo National Forest boundary. The boundary turns north along private land and follows a ranching road and the Mono Basin Scenic Area border until it rejoins the WSA's northern boundary.

The WSA is located along the western edge of the Basin and Range geomorphic province and comprises a broad landscape of various physical features. The western portion of the WSA lies several miles east and south of Mono Lake, occupying the southeast and central edges of Mono Basin. This portion of the WSA consists of westward-sloping fill deposits from ancient Lake Russell. These surface-fill deposits are composed of fine gravel silt and sand with interbedded sand and gravel material. The eastern portion of the WSA includes rugged granitic mountain complexes and rolling basalt hills with numerous closed basins. A small portion of Adobe Valley lies in the southeast corner of the WSA. Elevation ranges from 6,500 feet to 8,900 feet. The primary soil type of this WSA is sandy, pumiceous earth. Vegetation in the WSA varies and includes varieties of mixed desert shrubs and stands of pinyon pine and Utah juniper.

The unit provides a variety of visual amenities that are vividly striking during morning and evening hours. The Granite Mountain range, in the southern portion of the WSA, contains irregular granitic crags which are especially scenic and visually appealing. Cowtrack Mountain, in the center of the WSA, is composed of volcanic pumice which sharply contrasts with the nearby granitic rock formations.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Various suitability recommendations were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) for the

Benton-Owens Valley/Bodie-Coleville Wilderness Study Areas. A summary of the area's wilderness values was included in the Final EIS. Three different suitability recommendations were analyzed in the EISs: all wilderness, partial wilderness recommending approximately 62% of the area suitable, and no wilderness.

2.	<u>RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE</u> ---	0	acres recommended for wilderness
		58,045	BLM & USFS acres recommended for non-wilderness

No wilderness is the recommendation for this WSA. The entire acreage in this WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. The all wilderness alternative is considered to be the environmentally preferred alternative as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The no wilderness alternative will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The WSA is recommended non-suitable because its potential for mineral occurrence and the anticipated increase in livestock forage needs outweigh the area's wilderness values.

Resource conflicts in the WSA include moderate to high geothermal resource potential (half of the WSA is in a Known Geothermal Resource Area). Moderate metallic mineral potential for molybdenum exists west of Cowtrack Mountain and moderate potential for occurrence of metallic minerals exists east of Cowtrack Mountain.

In order to increase forage production and improve the range condition, the Bishop Resource Area Management Framework Plan proposes vegetative treatments to introduce grass and forb species to selected areas of the WSA. Two chemical sprays totalling 2,500 acres and five prescribed burns totalling 5,500 acres are proposed. An additional 569 Animal Unit Months (AUMs) would be available as a result of the planned vegetative manipulations.

There are approximately 40 miles of primitive ways which will remain available for vehicular use.

TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	54,178
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
USFS	(surface and subsurface)	3,867
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		193
Total		<u>58,238</u>
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Study Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<u>0</u>
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	54,178
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
USFS	(surface and subsurface)	3,867
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>54,178</u>
Total USFS Land Not Recommended for Wilderness ¹		<u>3,867</u>

¹The USFS has agreed to allow these lands, located in the Inyo National Forest, to be reported as part of BLM's WSR. When Congress acts, the lands will be managed in accordance with the current approved management plan.

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The unit has maintained its overall natural character and primitive setting. The WSA consists of varied environments including portions of Mono Basin and Adobe Valley as well as sandy, brush-covered Cowtrack Mountain. Perhaps the most striking portion of the unit is Granite Mountain -- a granitic mass of rounded, rocky buttes and buttresses sharply thrust upward from the landscape below. Numerous drainages dissect the WSA resulting in broad, softly eroded canyons and enclosed basins.

The upper elevations of the northern and eastern sides of the WSA are forested with pinyon and juniper. The lower hills and valleys are dominated by sagebrush and other mixed shrubs. The sagebrush covers 65% of the WSA.

Some man-made influences do exist in the WSA but are considered visually negligible due to the unit's large size and variable terrain. In addition, the magnitude of these influences is low. They include pipelines, livestock water troughs, fences, some mining prospects, and approximately 40 miles of primitive, sandy vehicle routes. Some routes are being reinvaded by nearby vegetation giving the routes a "two-track" appearance. Overall, these features have low, negligible effects on naturalness.

In 1984, a wildfire, caused by area visitors, burned most of the vegetation on 2,140 acres north of Cowtrack Spring. Several miles of fire breaks were constructed to prevent the fire from spreading. Although this is four percent of the WSA, the fire occurred in a basin area that is plainly and broadly visible from surrounding hillsides. The area appears as a barren and desolate landscape; windblown sand has masked much of the charred surface.

The fire breaks were closed to prevent vehicle access and the area was aerially reseeded in fall of 1985. Rehabilitation has been, to date, very successful with an initial establishment of grasses, forbs, and shrub species which currently blanket the area.

2. Solitude: The area provides abundant and varied opportunities for solitude. The WSA's size, diverse topographic features, and vegetative screening provide outstanding opportunities for desolation and barrenness throughout the internal basin, thus psychologically heightening one's isolation in the unit.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude

which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and unconfined recreation: Outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation experiences are abundant in the unit. These experiences include hunting, horseback riding, camping, backpacking, nature appreciation, scenic photography, hiking, rock climbing, etc. In addition, there are high scenic values within the WSA--Cowtrack Mountain and Granite Mountain. There are very few permanent water sources in this unit. Water would have to be cached or carried.
4. Special features: The unit contains several special features of noteworthy interest. Wildlife values are high in the WSA. The WSA contains deer migration corridors and raptor nesting areas. The deer migration corridors provide an intact natural environment for deer during critical seasonal movements. Remnants of historic Bodie-Mono Mills Railroad and prehistoric sites can also be found.

The WSA contains a population of Eriogonum amplexicaule, a United States Fish and Wildlife Service candidate for the threatened and endangered species plant list. The population is located along Deep Wells Road at the extreme eastern edge of the unit. This annual plant is often found in areas having previous surface disturbances. Stability of the population is unknown.

B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS)

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 49,502 acres of the Intermountain Sagebrush/Great Basin Sagebrush and 8,543 acres of the Intermountain Sagebrush/Juniper-Pinyon Woodlands ecosystems. The Granite Mountain WSA would not increase the diversity of the types of ecosystems represented in the NWPS.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush/ Great Basin Sagebrush	1	32,407	55	1,158,773
Juniper-Pinyon Woodlands	4	81,301	74	2,143,567
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush/ Great Basin Sagebrush	0	0	19	174,307
Juniper-Pinyon Woodlands	3	61,701	18	358,097

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a days driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of six major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3 - Wilderness Opportunities for Residents of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>California</u>				
Fresno	35	4,048,852	28	460,790
Merced	33	3,957,550	25	348,753
Modesto	36	4,126,963	81	1,722,326
Sacramento	46	5,001,817	87	2,479,541
Stockton	35	4,061,833	46	601,496
<u>Nevada</u>				
Reno	39	4,647,230	170	6,904,809

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: There are no BLM WSAs within 50 air miles recommended for wilderness designation. Yosemite National Park, administered by the National Park Service and the Hoover Wilderness, administered by the Toiyabe and the Inyo National Forests are located approximately 30 miles west of the WSA. These are the nearest designated wilderness areas. Other nearby designated wilderness areas include the Ansel Adams Wilderness which is managed by the Inyo National Forest.

C. Manageability

The Granite Mountain WSA would be manageable as wilderness although some limitations may exist.

Portions of the WSA along the boundaries are vulnerable to indiscriminate off-highway vehicle use. Although this use is low, signing and fencing would be required to protect the unit's integrity. Periodic patrols would also be required.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of information known at the time of the preliminary suitability recommendation: The Granite Mountain WSA is in the BLM Mono Geology-Energy-Minerals (G-E-M) Resource Area (GRA). BLM G-E-M data in the Affected Environment section of the Wilderness Recommendations Benton-Owens Valley Bodie-Coleville Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in 1987 indicated that the WSA has mostly low potential for metallic minerals with some areas of moderate and some areas of no potential. The EIS states that there is mostly low potential for uranium and thorium with moderate uranium potential in the southern portion and along the eastern edge of the WSA. There is moderate potential from sand and gravel alluvial deposits in some parts of the WSA with no potential in the majority of the WSA. The EIS states that there is no potential for oil or gas. There is a high potential for geothermal resources in the western third with a moderate occurrence potential in the remainder of the WSA.

The G-E-M report states that there is moderate favorability for molybdenum in the southwestern part of the WSA based on the distribution of unpatented claims and on reports of an unconfirmed molybdenum exploration drilling program in this area. The G-E-M report recognizes moderate uranium favorability in the southern portion of the WSA. This occurrence potential is based on the presence of presumed vein-type uranium mineralization in granite. The G-E-M report states that all places in the WSA where alluvium is present have moderate potential for sand and gravel. The G-E-M report identifies an area of unknown metallic mineralization in the southeastern portion of the WSA. The G-E-M report considers this area to have moderate favorability for metallic minerals and speculates about the presence of precious metal occurrences.

There were approximately 60 mining claims in the WSA in 1987. The G-E-M report states that there are several hot springs adjacent to and within the WSA.

Much of the WSA is underlain by Pleistocene volcanics which are indicative of a heat source which is still present at a relatively shallow depth. Based on this geologic assessment, the G-E-M report gave the western third of the WSA high occurrence potential and the eastern two-thirds of the WSA moderate occurrence potential for geothermal resources. The western third of the WSA is in the Mono-Long Valley Known Geothermal Resource Area (KGRA) (USGS, unpublished map, "Lands Valuable for Geothermal Resources", revised July, 1985). There were some geothermal lease applications for this WSA in 1987.

Summary of significant new mineral resource data collected since the suitability recommendation which should be considered in the final recommendation: No U.S. Geologic Survey (USGS) or U.S. Bureau of Mines (BOM) mineral surveys were conducted in this WSA.

No additional information about the mineral potential in this WSA has been received since 1987. As of March 25, 1988, BLM records identified (5) five lode mining claims in this WSA (Table 4). The western one-fifth of the WSA, covering an area of 10,420 acres, is within the Mono-Long Valley KGRA.

Table 4 - Mining Claims

TYPE	NO.			ACRES		
	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL
Mining Claims						
Lode	0	5	5		100	100
Placer	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mill Sites	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	5	5	0	100	100

E. Impacts on Resources

The following table summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for all alternatives considered including designation or non-designation of the entire area as wilderness. (For a full explanation of this summary, refer to the Benton-Owens Valley/Bodie-Coleville Wilderness - Final Environmental Impact Statement.)

Table 5 - Comparative Summary of Impacts by Alternative

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	PARTIAL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Wilderness Values	<p>The primary impacts to wilderness values would originate from projected development of an open-pit gold mine in the western portion of the WSA and anticipated geothermal development in the northwest portion of the WSA. The open-pit gold mine and the geothermal power facility would result in a direct loss of naturalness on 225 acres. The perception of naturalness and sense of solitude would be impaired within 7,500 acres surrounding the mineral and energy developments. Livestock projects would impair the perception of naturalness on an additional 40 acres resulting in short-term minor to negligible impacts to solitude as a result of construction and maintenance. Prescribed burns and chemical treatments on 8,000 acres would result in short-term impacts to naturalness until vegetation is reestablished. Impacts from continued and projected motorized recreation use (1,100 visitor-days) would be minor. There would be localized im-</p>	<p>Wilderness designation would retain and slightly enhance wilderness values by eliminating motorized recreation use (1,100 visitor-days) as well as precluding mineral development and geothermal development. By prohibiting planned vegetative manipulations on 8,000 acres, short-term impacts to naturalness, as well as solitude, would not occur and the existing perception of naturalness would be retained. Proposed livestock projects including water developments and pipelines would impair the perception of naturalness on 40 acres and result in localized short-term minor to negligible impacts to solitude as a result of construction and maintenance. Opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation and special features within the WSA would slightly benefit under wilderness designation.</p>	<p>There would be a slight positive benefit to wilderness values within the 36,108 acres designated as wilderness. Elimination of 800 visitor-days of motorized recreation use on 30 miles of primitive vehicle routes and precluding vegetative manipulations for increased livestock use (7,350 acres) would retain and enhance the perception of naturalness and the sense of solitude. Special features and opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation would benefit from prohibiting motorized recreation use. Livestock water developments would impair the perception of naturalness on 15 acres and result in short-term minor to negligible impacts to solitude.</p> <p>Within the 22,130 acres not designated as wilderness the primary impacts to wilderness values would originate from projected development of an open-pit gold mine in the western portion of the</p>

Table 5 - Comparative Summary of Impacts by Alternative (Cont.)

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	PARTIAL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Wilderness Values (continued)	<p>Impacts on primitive and unconfined recreation as opportunities would be limited within the areas of mining activity and geothermal development. There would be slight impacts to special features as a result of continued motorized recreation use. There would be no perceptible impacts anticipated from other projected management actions.</p>		<p>WSA and anticipated geothermal development in the northwestern portion of the WSA. Naturalness would be lost on 225 acres. The perception of naturalness and the sense of solitude would be impaired within 7,500 acres. Livestock projects including prescribed burns would result in short-term impacts to naturalness on 675 acres. Impacts from continued and increased motorized recreation use (400 visitor-days) would be minor. Opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation would be locally impacted due to mineral and geothermal development as well as continued motor vehicle use of 10 miles of primitive vehicle routes. There would only be negligible impacts on special features due to projected management actions and uses within the non-designated portion of the WSA.</p>
Motorized Recreation Use	<p>There would be no impact on motorized recreation use which is projected to increase from the current annual level of 1,000 visitor-days to 1,100 visitor-days.</p>	<p>Motorized recreation use totaling 1,000 visitor-days per year within the 58,238-acre WSA would be foregone. Opportunities to shift this use to other nearby public lands are limited and may result in an overall slight loss of use within the general area. Impacts to the Sierra Safari would mostly necessitate rerouting of their course. Overall, there would be a moderate impact to motorized recreation use.</p>	<p>Overall, there would be a minor impact on motorized recreation use as a result of designating 36,108 acres as wilderness. This portion of the WSA including approximately 30 miles of primitive vehicle routes would be closed to motorized recreation use with 800 visitor-days of use foregone. The remaining 22,130 acres would continue to provide opportunities for motorized recreation use on approximately 10 miles of primitive vehicle routes.</p>

Table 5 - Comparative Summary of Impacts by Alternative (Cont.)

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	PARTIAL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Motorized Recreation Use (cont.)			The current use of 200 visitor days would be anticipated to increase to a total of 400 visitor-days as a result of displaced use from the designated portion of the WSA. Within the entire WSA there would be a net loss of 600 visitor-days of motorized recreation use.
Livestock Grazing and Range Improvements	There would be no impact to livestock grazing and range improvements. All existing operations and proposed projects would be permitted, including 8,000 acres of vegetative manipulations to increase forage production by 569 AUMs to a total of 3,424 AUMs.	Under the All-wilderness Alternative, planned vegetative manipulations on 8,000 acres would be precluded and a projected increase of 569 AUMs would be foregone. Current livestock use (2,855 AUMs) would continue and all other projected improvements including six water developments and two water pipelines would be permitted. Overall, there would be a minor impact on livestock grazing and range improvements.	Overall, livestock use would increase by 36 AUMs to a total of 2,891 AUMs as a result of 650 acres of prescribed burns within the 22,130 acres of the WSA not designated as wilderness. Vegetative manipulations (7,350 acres) within the 36,108 acres designated wilderness would be precluded and an increase of 533 AUMs would be foregone. Other planned livestock projects would continue throughout the WSA. There would be a minor impact on livestock grazing and range improvements.
Mineral Development	There would be no impact on mineral development. Exploration and development of a moderate potential for metallic minerals would potentially lead to the development of an open-pit gold mine in the western portion of the WSA.	Wilderness designation would result in closing the entire 54,178 acres to mineral entry. Exploration and development of potential mineral resources within the WSA would be foregone, including a potential deposit of disseminated gold in the western portion of the WSA. Development of a potential open-pit gold mine would be prohibited.	There would be no impact to mineral development. The 36,108 acres of the WSA designated wilderness are considered to have a zero to low potential for minerals. The remaining 22,130 acres not designated as wilderness would be open to all forms of mineral entry. Development of a potential open-pit gold mine would be within the non-designated portion of the WSA.

Table 5 - Comparative Summary of Impacts by Alternative (Cont.)

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	PARTIAL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Geothermal Development	There would be no impact on geothermal development under the Proposed Action. Exploration and development of geothermal resources would be permitted in the WSA. Development of a 50-Mw geothermal resource is projected.	Geothermal resource development would be prohibited. Development of a potential 50-Mw geothermal resource would be foregone. Over the long term this would result in a minor impact.	There would be no impact on geothermal development under the Partial-wilderness Alternative. Development of a 50-Mw geothermal resource is anticipated within the 22,130 acres not designated as wilderness. While exploration and development within the 36,108 acres designated as wilderness is a low development potential although there is a moderate potential for geothermal resources. No development is anticipated therefore no geothermal resource production would be foregone.
Cultural Resources	Under the Proposed Action, cultural resources within the WSA would be vulnerable to impacts resulting from geothermal resource development, construction of a pipeline for livestock use, and continued motorized recreation use. Surface inventories prior to surface-disturbing activities, and an existing Cultural Resource Management Plan would limit potential impacts within areas of predicted high cultural resource sensitivity and to the historic Bodie-Mono Mills railroad. Mitigating measures would be established to either avoid cultural sites or salvage potential artifacts. Continued motorized vehicle use in the WSA would contribute to continued unauthorized collection of artifacts.	There would be slight positive benefits to cultural resources within the WSA due to precluding geothermal development and continued motorized recreation use. The historic Bodie-Mono Mills railroad grade would potentially be negligibly impacted by development of a planned water pipeline for livestock use.	There would be a slight positive benefit to cultural resources within the 36,108 acres of the WSA designated as wilderness as a result of prohibition of motor vehicle use. Within the remaining 22,130 acres, cultural resources would be vulnerable to potential impacts. Surface inventories to determine the location of potential sites and develop appropriate mitigating measures if necessary as well as an existing Cultural Resources Management Plan would minimize potential impacts as a result of geothermal development and construction of a pipeline for livestock. Continued motorized recreation use within the non-designated portion of the WSA would contribute to continued unauthorized collection of artifacts.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

During the inventory phase, a few comments addressed mineral values and geothermal resources. One comment noted the lack of access to private inholdings.

One comment received during the wilderness study process noted outside sights and sounds as influencing wilderness values in the WSA.

A public meeting and public hearing were held in association with the draft environmental impact statement for the WSAs within the EIS area. The public meeting was held in Markleeville, California, and the public hearing in Bishop, California. Comments were received both orally through the hearing, and in writing during the 90-day public review period. A total of 84 written and oral comments were received. Thirty-one comments supported the Bureau's no-wilderness recommendation. Forty-five comments supported the all-wilderness alternative, while eight comments supported the partial-wilderness alternative.

No comments specific to this WSA were received by Federal or State agencies.

Mono County provided a comment during the inventory phase expressing the need for multiple use of the area.

Walford Springs

CA-010-092

WALFORD SPRINGS WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CA-010-092)

1. THE STUDY AREA --- 13,006 acres

The Walford Springs WSA is located in east-central Mono County, approximately 21 miles northeast of Lee Vining, California. The WSA includes 12,840 acres of BLM lands, 166 acres of private land, and no State lands. (See Map 1 and Table 1)

The northern boundary of the WSA follows a 60-kV powerline right-of-way northeast along State Highway 167, then a private land boundary east to the Dobie Meadows Road. The boundary proceeds southeast along this road on the eastern boundary to a maintained road which delineates the southern boundary along with an irregular private land boundary. The boundary then heads northwest along the Mono Basin Scenic Area boundary until it hits a parcel of private land and the 60-kV powerline right-of-way along State Highway 167.

The WSA is located along the western edge of the Basin and Range geomorphic province just east and north of Mono Lake, within a gentle southwest sloping valley consisting of lacustrine and sand dune deposits of ancient Lake Russell. The terrain within the WSA is rather uniform providing little scenic variety. Elevation ranges from 6,440 to 6,800 feet. The vegetation consists of Great Basin shrubs with scattered Juniper trees in the northwestern corner.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Various suitability recommendations were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) for the Benton-Owens Valley/Bodie-Coleville Wilderness Study Areas. A summary of the area's wilderness values was included in the Final EIS. Two different suitability recommendations were analyzed in the EIS: all wilderness and no wilderness.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE --- 0 acres recommended
for wilderness
12,840 BLM acres recommended
for non-wilderness

No wilderness is the recommendation for this WSA. The entire acreage in this WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. The all-wilderness alternative is considered to be the environmentally preferred alternative as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The no-wilderness alternative will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The WSA is recommended non-suitable because its potential for mineral exploration and development outweighs the area's marginal wilderness values. Within this WSA, wilderness values are considered low due to the lack of significant wilderness features or characteristics unique to the region. In addition, manageability was a consideration in the non-suitable recommendation.

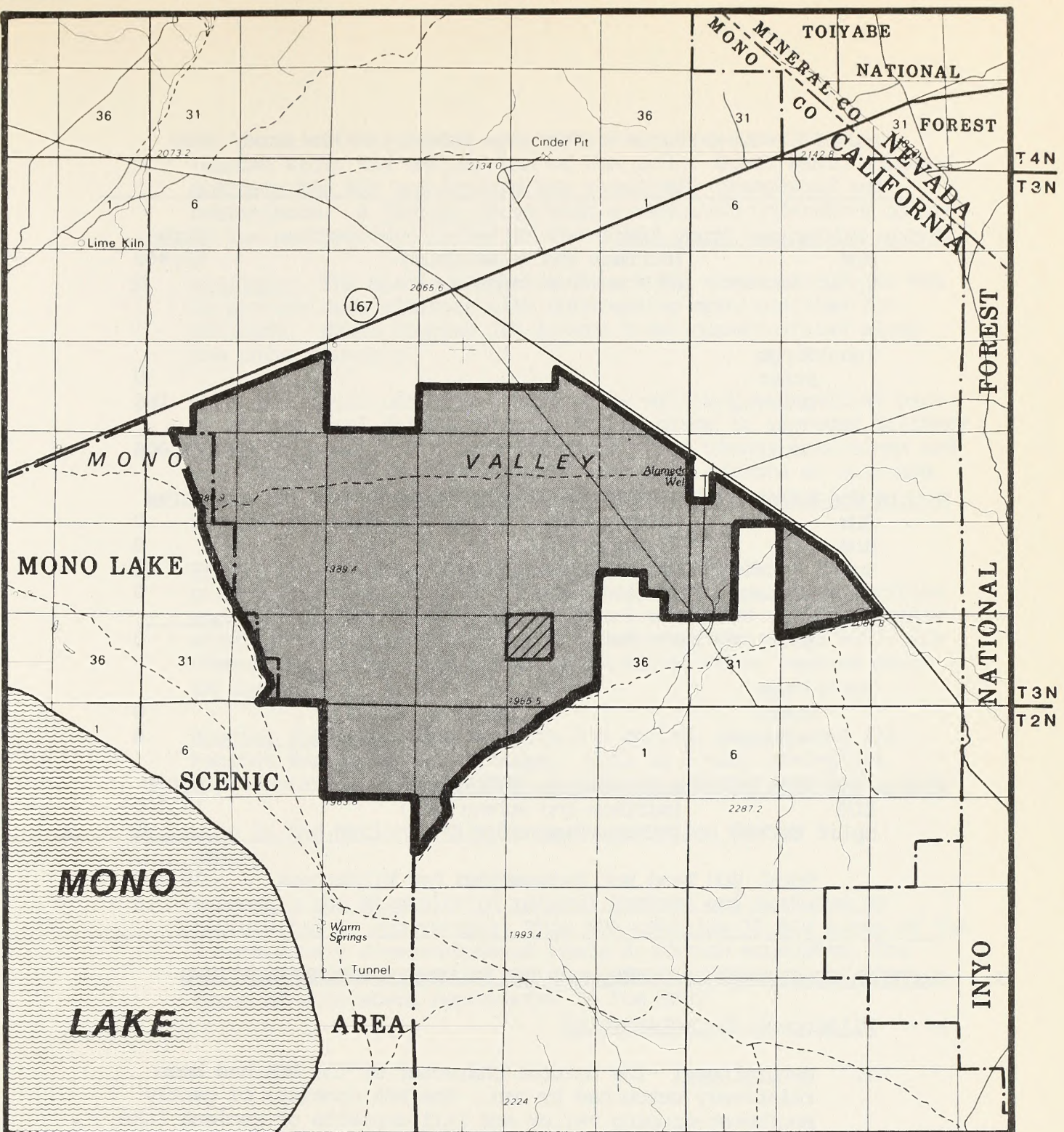
Solitude is somewhat affected visually by vehicle use occurring on State Highway 167 which lies along the WSA's north boundary. Vehicle use occurs on this highway on an intermittent to regular basis.

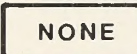






Resource conflicts in the WSA include moderate to high potential for geothermal resources. Some geothermal exploration has occurred within three miles of the WSA in the Mono-Long Valley Known Geothermal Resource Area.

The WSA reflects an environment that is bleak and visually bland. The topography and vegetation is common throughout most of Mono Basin. The WSA's vegetative patterns, forms, and textures blend together into a monotonous landform cover. The juniper trees in the northwest and some localized dune formations provide some visual variety. The lack of significant or unique wilderness values contributes to this wilderness quality. As a result, this WSA would provide little or no significant enhancement to the National Wilderness Preservation System.

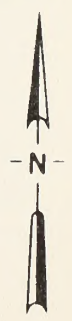
The WSA's relatively flat, broad topography renders it vulnerable to vehicle encroachment. The lack of natural barriers along the unit's boundaries would make it difficult to manage as wilderness.

There are approximately nine miles of primitive ways which will remain available for vehicular use.



- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|----------------------------|---|--------------|
|  | NONE |  | RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |  | SPLIT ESTATE |
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS |  | STATE |  | PRIVATE |
|  | LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS | | | | |

**Walford Springs
Proposal
MAP-1**



010-092
JUNE, 1988

TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	12,840
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		166
Total		<u>13,006</u>
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Study Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<u>0</u>
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	12,840
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>12,840</u>

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The natural character of the WSA has been relatively untouched by man. The WSA consists of gently southwest-sloping valley and fill deposits of ancient Lake Russell, a remnant of the Quaternary age. A few man-made imprints are generally unnoticeable in the WSA as a whole; two fence lines are effectively screened by dense vegetation, and nine miles of primitive vehicle routes are being revegetated, giving the routes a "two-track" appearance.

The terrain is generally uniform. Some dune formations are located along the western end of the unit. Great Basin shrubs dominate the WSA and include big sagebrush, greasewood and cottonthorn. A juniper grove with a sagebrush understory occurs in the northwestern corner of the unit.

2. Solitude: The spaciousness and vegetative screening of the WSA to provide area visitors with outstanding opportunities for solitude. State Highway 167 lowers these opportunities along the north boundary.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and unconfined recreation: Opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation include activities such as camping, hiking, hunting, and horseback riding. Scenic views of the eastern Sierra, Mono Lake, and the Bodie Hills are common from within the unit. No permanent water sources exist in the unit.
4. Special features: The WSA contains spring, summer, and fall habitat for pronghorn antelope. This is a good ecological representation of Great Basin pronghorn antelope habitat.

B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS)

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 12,840 acres of the Intermountain Sagebrush/Great Basin Sagebrush ecosystem. The Walford Springs WSA would not increase the diversity of the types of ecosystems represented in the NWPS.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush/ Great Basin Sagebrush	1	32,407	55	1,192,435
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush/ Great Basin Sagebrush	0	0	19	207,969

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of six major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3 - Wilderness Opportunities for Residents of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
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Stockton	35	4,061,833	46	601,496
<u>Nevada</u>				
Reno	39	4,647,230	170	6,904,809

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA is within 50 air miles of 1 BLM WSA recommended for wilderness designation. Yosemite National Park, administered by the National Park Service and the Hoover Wilderness, administered by the Toiyabe and the Inyo National Forests are located approximately 27 miles west of the WSA. These are the nearest designated wilderness areas. Other nearby designated wilderness areas include the Ansel Adams Wilderness which is managed by the Inyo National Forest.

C. Manageability

The Walford Springs WSA is manageable as wilderness, but with some difficulty. A lack of natural barriers along the WSA's boundary makes it vulnerable to indiscriminate off-highway vehicle use. The gentle terrain and low vegetation are susceptible to four-wheel drive use and other types of off-road vehicles. Frequent signing, fencing most of the border, and intensive patrolling would be required to insure the integrity of the unit.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of information known at the time of preliminary suitability recommendation: The Walford Springs WSA is located within the Mono Geology-Energy-Minerals (G-E-M) Resource Area (GRA). The geology and mineral resources of the Walford Springs WSA was described in the Mono G-E-M Resources Area Technical Report (GRA No. CA-03) prepared in 1983 by Great Basin G-E-M Joint Venture. The mineral resources in the Affected Environment section of the 1987 BLM Wilderness Recommendations, Benton-Owens Valley/Bodie-Coleville Study Area's EIS was taken primarily from the G-E-M report mentioned above. The EIS states that the WSA has a low potential for metallic minerals, uranium and thorium. There is no potential for non-metallic minerals or oil and gas. The western portion of the WSA was identified as having a high potential for geothermal resources, with the remainder determined to have moderate potential.

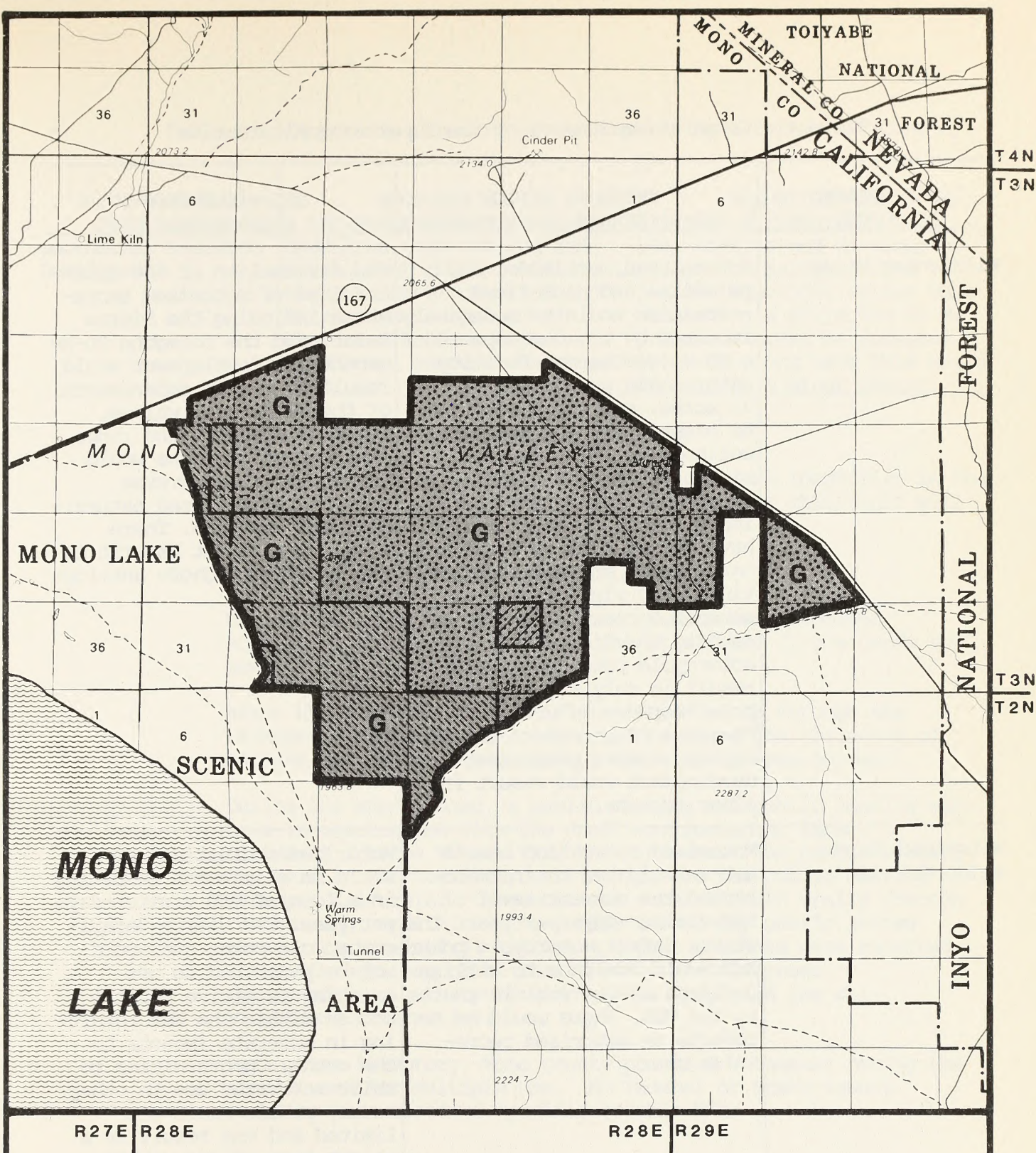
According to the G-E-M report, the entire WSA is covered with lacustrine sediments deposited by the predecessor of Mono Lake. Although covered, a study of the surrounding geologic environment indicated that the lake sediments are underlain by mafic volcanics which were deposited over rhyolite flows. These Pliocene volcanics lie unconformably upon granitic intrusives of the Sierra Nevada Batholith. The western margin of the WSA is in the Mono-Long Valley Known Geothermal Resource Area (KGRA) (U.S. Geological Survey unpublished map, "Lands Available for Geothermal Resources", Revised July 1985.). Portions of this area had lease applications pending. The presence of hot springs in and around the WSA together with evidence for recent episodes of volcanic activity and faulting at shallow depths support the determination of moderate geothermal resource potential for this WSA. No leases, mines or mining claims were located in the WSA.

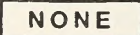



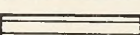

2. Summary of significant new mineral resource data collected since the suitability recommendation which should be considered in the final recommendation: No U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) or U.S. Bureau of Mines (BOM) mineral surveys were conducted in this WSA.

Since the original EIS, the pending geothermal leases applications have been withdrawn. No other information about mineral potential has been received since 1987. As of March 25, 1988, BLM records indicated no mines, mining claims or leases within the boundaries of the WSA.

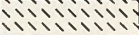
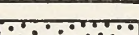
E. Impacts on Resources

The following table summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for all alternatives considered including designation or non-designation of the entire area as wilderness. (For a full explanation of this summary, refer to the Benton-Owens Valley/Bodie-Coleville Wilderness - Final Environmental Impact Statement.)



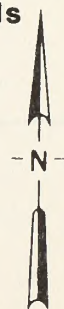
- | | |
|--|---|
|  | Recommended for Wilderness |
|  | Recommended for Non Wilderness |
|  | Land outside WSA Recommended for Wilderness |
|  | Split Estate |
|  | State |
|  | Private |

Explanation

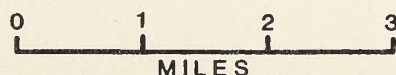
- | | |
|---|--|
|  | High Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals |
|  | Moderate Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals |
| M | Moderate Mineral Potential Location in a High Mineral Potential Area |
| H | High Mineral Potential Location in a Moderate Mineral Potential Area |

Commodity Symbols

G Geothermal



Walford Springs
Mineral Resource Potential



Map-2
010-092

Table 4 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Wilderness Values	<p>Naturalness, solitude, and primitive and unconfined recreation would be moderately impaired by the development of a 50-Mw geothermal facility. Naturalness would be lost on 70 acres, and the perception of naturalness and sense of solitude would be impaired within an area of 3,000 acres. Proposed wildlife and range improvement projects would have low impacts to localized naturalness and solitude. Continued 550 visitor-days of motorized recreation use including the Sierra Safari motorcycle poker run would result in only slight impacts to wilderness values. Loss of 70 acres of pronghorn antelope habitat due to geothermal development would result in minor impacts.</p>	<p>The elimination of 550 visitor days of motorized recreation including the Sierra Safari and the foregone 50-Mw geothermal development would result in slight enhancement of the wilderness values. Proposed wildlife and range improvement projects would have negligible adverse impacts to localized naturalness and solitude. There would be a slight benefit to the area's pronghorn antelope habitat.</p>
Motorized Recreation Use	<p>Motorized recreation use is not anticipated to increase beyond the current level of 550 visitor-days per year. The Sierra Safari motorcycle poker run would continue to utilize portions of the vehicle routes in the WSA. There would be no impacts on motorized recreation use.</p>	<p>Motorized recreation use would be eliminated resulting in a loss of 550 visitor-days per year. The Sierra Safari motorcycle poker run would not be permitted to use existing primitive vehicle routes within the WSA resulting in moderate impacts to the event. Opportunities to shift motorized use to other nearby public lands are limited and may result in a slight loss of use within the general area. Overall there would be a moderate adverse impact on motorized recreation use.</p>

Table 4 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative (Cont'd)

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Geothermal Resource Development	Geothermal exploration and development could occur within the WSA. Development of a 50-Mw resource is projected. There would be no impacts on geothermal resource development.	Exploration and development of geothermal resources within the Mono-Long Valley KGRA including a projected 50-Mw resource would be foregone. Over the long term this would result in a minor impact.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

During the inventory phase, a few comments were received addressing the WSA's geothermal potential, and future needs for powerline corridor expansion.

After the inventory, comments were received up through the wilderness study process. One comment noted the influence of outside sights and sounds on the WSA's wilderness values.

During the study phase, a public meeting and public hearing were held in association with the draft environmental impact statement for the WSAs within the EIS area. The public meeting was held in Markleeville, California, and the public hearing in Bishop, California. Comments were received both orally through the hearing, and in writing during the 90-day public review period. A total of 83 written and oral comments were received. Forty comments supported the Bureau's no-wilderness recommendation. Forty-three comments supported the all-wilderness alternative.

During the inventory, Mono County provided a comment noting the area's need for multiple use. No Federal or State agency comments were received specific to this WSA.

Mormon Meadow

CA-010-094

MORMON MEADOW WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CA-010-094)

1. THE STUDY AREA — 8,354 acres

The Mormon Meadow Wilderness Study Area (WSA) is located in northeastern Mono County, approximately nine miles southeast of Bridgeport, California. The WSA includes 7,721 acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands, 633 acres of private inholdings, and no State land (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The northern boundary of the WSA follows private lands easterly in the Mormon Meadow area. The boundary turns south on Bridgeport Canyon County Road and proceeds south skirting private land at two locations until it rejoins the road. The boundary abruptly jogs south and east near Goat Ranch until it intersects a 60-kV transmission line right-of-way. The boundary turns and proceeds southwest along the right-of-way and some private land until Rancheria Gulch. The boundary then leads northwest cross-country and around private land until reaching Little Mormon Meadow Road. The boundary continues north along the road to Little Bodie Mine and then follows a perennial tributary of Clearwater Creek to private land in Mormon Meadow. The WSA occupies the southwestern corner of the Bodie Hills, which straddles the transitional zone of the Basin and Range geomorphic province and the Sierra Nevada geomorphic province. The WSA encompasses an area of steep, rounded volcanic hills dissected by a few intermittent drainages. Elevation ranges from 6,800 feet to 8,600 feet. The southern quarter of the unit is uniformly covered with stands of pinyon-juniper while the remainder is dominated by desert shrub species. Grasses occupy the meadow areas. A few spring sources are located in the WSA. The southern portion of the WSA provides picturesque and scenic vistas of Mono Lake and its basin which is a few miles south of the unit.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Various suitability recommendations were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) for the Benton-Owens Valley/Bodie-Coleville Wilderness Study Areas. A summary of the area's wilderness values was included in the Final EIS. Two different suitability recommendations were analyzed in the EISs: all wilderness, and no wilderness.

2. <u>RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE</u> —	0	acres recommended for wilderness
	7,721	BLM acres recommended for non-wilderness

No wilderness is the recommendation for this WSA. The entire acreage in this WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. The all-wilderness alternative is considered to be the environmentally preferred alternative as

it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The no-wilderness alternative will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

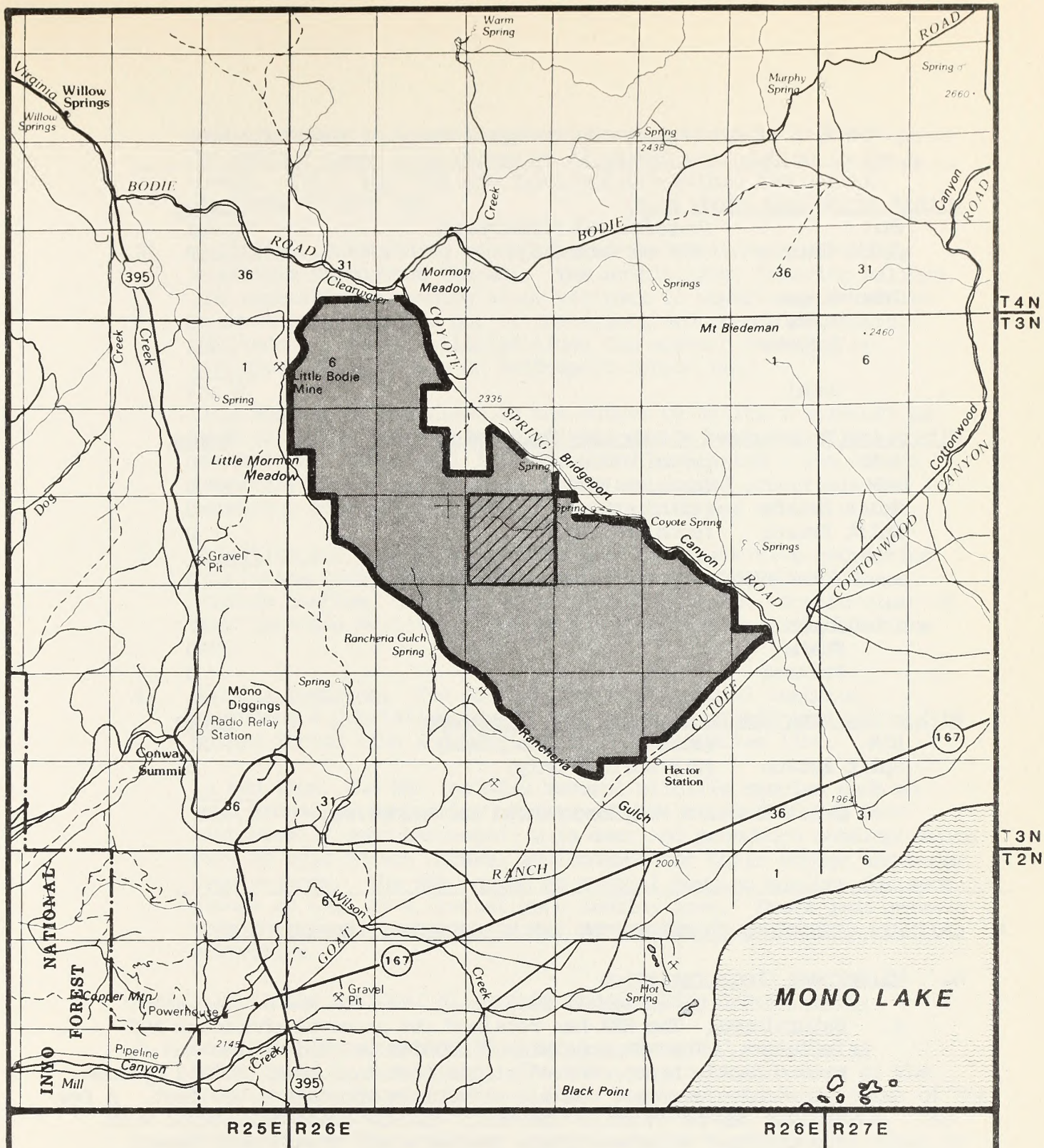
The WSA is recommended nonsuitable because its potential for mineral occurrence outweighs the area's marginal wilderness values. Within this WSA, wilderness values are considered low due to the lack of significant wilderness features or characteristics unique to the region. Manageability was a secondary consideration in the non-suitable recommendation.

Resource conflicts in the WSA include high potential for metallic minerals in the north edge of the unit. This high potential area contains approximately 24 mining claims with moderate probability for determination of valid existing rights. Development of mining claims which are found to have valid existing rights could impair the area's wilderness values with or without wilderness designation. The WSA also contains high potential for geothermal resources. Geothermal lease applications are pending along the WSA's southeast corner. Development potential for geothermal resources is moderate.


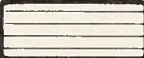

The WSA reflects an environment that contains wilderness values which are not considered significant or unique to the area. Although the unit is topographically varied, the landform reflects an environment that is visually mediocre in relation to the rest of the Bodie Hills and other nearby areas. The most visually appealing portion of the WSA is located on a large private inholding within the unit. As a result, wilderness values are considered low and would provide little or no significant enhancement to the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS).

The WSA's lack of natural barriers along portions of its boundaries and the potential for mining claim development in areas of high mineral value would limit management of the area as wilderness. Additionally, a large private inholding within the WSA may further hinder manageability.

There are approximately four miles of primitive ways which will remain available for vehicular use.

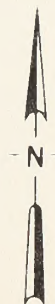


- | | | |
|---|------|---|
|  | NONE | RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |
|  | | RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS |
|  | | LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |

- | | |
|---|--------------|
|  | SPLIT ESTATE |
|  | STATE |
|  | PRIVATE |

**Mormon Meadows
Proposal
MAP-1**

0 1 2 3
MILES



010-094
JUNE, 1988

TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	7,721
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		633
Total		8,354
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Study Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Lands Recommended for Wilderness		0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	7,721
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		7,721

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The WSA has retained its primeval character and influence. The WSA consists of rounded volcanic hills and predominantly brush covered slopes that have been incised by some ephemeral drainages. Summit elevations approach 9,000 feet. A few springs can be found in the unit. Meadow areas associated with the springs' sources contain grasses while Great Basin desert shrubs blanket the drier areas. Pinyon pine, Utah juniper, and quaking aspen are also located in the unit. The south quarter of the unit is dominated by pinyon-juniper associations. To the north, small isolated groves of aspen inhabit the higher elevations.

The works of man are substantially unnoticeable in the WSA as a whole. These works include approximately four miles of primitive

vehicle routes, one spring development and some localized impacts to wetland areas from excessive livestock utilization in these areas. These imprints are imperceptible within the overall confines of this WSA.

2. Solitude: Outstanding opportunities for solitude are readily available throughout the WSA. The unit's size, interior valleys, and vegetative screening allow visitors to experience primitive recreation activities out of the sights and sounds of others. Solitude is visually limited along the eastern boundary by occasional vehicle use on Bridgeport Canyon Road.

This WSA may be overflowed in the future by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission during approved military operations. The visual intrusions and associated noise create temporary effects on solitude which are deemed acceptable and necessary as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and unconfined recreation: Most primitive recreation activities would be well accommodated within the area. These include hunting, camping, horseback riding, etc. Scenic views of Mono Lake are available from within the southern fringes of the WSA.
4. Special features: The WSA contains some special features including a population of Phacelia monoensis, which is on the United States Fish and Wildlife Candidate Species list.

In addition, the WSA includes several wildlife species such as sage grouse, a recovering species of game birds that has been historically over-harvested; mule deer and pronghorn antelope which rely on this intact natural environment for their forage and cover requirements. The WSA serves as crucial nesting habitat for sage grouse as well as a crucial deer fawning area. These game animals rely on the unit's natural cover for nesting and fawning activities.

B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS)

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: The WSA contains 5,000 acres of the Intermountain Sagebrush/Great Basin Sagebrush and 2,721 acres of the Intermountain Sagebrush/Juniper-Pinyon Woodlands ecosystems. The Mormon Meadow WSA would not increase the diversity of the types of ecosystems represented in the NWPS.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	NWPS Areas		Other BLM Studies	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush/ Great Basin Sagebrush	1	32,407	55	1,200,045
Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	4	81,301	74	2,148,579
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush/ Great Basin Sagebrush	0	0	19	215,579
Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	3	61,701	18	363,109

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a days driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of nine major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3 - Wilderness Opportunities for Residents of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	NWPS Areas		Other BLM Studies	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>California</u>				
Chico	16	1,286,873	13	430,822
Fresno	35	4,048,852	28	460,790
Merced	33	3,957,550	25	348,753
Modesto	36	4,126,963	81	1,722,326
Sacramento	46	5,001,817	87	2,479,541
Stockton	35	4,061,833	46	601,496
Vallejo-Napa-Fairfield	44	4,832,667	74	2,100,862
Yuba City	44	4,951,805	85	2,495,500
<u>Nevada</u>				
Reno	39	4,647,230	170	6,904,809

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA is within 50 air miles of one BLM WSA recommended for wilderness designation. The Hoover Wilderness, 15 miles to the west, is the nearest designated wilderness area. This wilderness area is administered by the Toiyabe and the Inyo National Forests. Other

nearby designated wilderness areas include Yosemite National Park which is managed by the National Park Service, the Ansel Adams Wilderness which is managed by the Inyo National Forest, and the Carson-Iceberg Wilderness which is managed by the Toiyabe National Forest.

C. Manageability

Although the area is manageable as wilderness, it would be difficult due to a lack of easily identifiable boundaries along the western edge. Additionally, the lack of topographic or vegetative barriers along Bridgeport Canyon Road would make the WSA susceptible to indiscriminate off-highway vehicle use, particularly snowmobiles. The northern edge of the unit may become altogether unmanageable because of high metallic mineral potential with numerous mining claims located in this area. Although the probability is moderate, a determination of valid existing mineral development rights in this portion of the unit may completely impede wilderness management in this area. Wilderness values of naturalness, solitude and opportunities for primitive recreation experiences could be permanently impaired in this area.

The centralized location of private inholdings virtually bisects the WSA. This portion of the WSA is less than one-half mile in width. Although no development activities are foreseen, incompatible uses on this private inholding could additionally hinder wilderness management.

Considerable signing, patrolling, and fencing substantial portions of the WSA would be required to maintain the area's natural integrity. Purchase of the private inholding would be necessary in order to enhance wilderness manageability.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of information known at the time of the preliminary suitability recommendation: The Mormon Meadow WSA is in the BIM Bodie Geology-Energy-Mineral (G-E-M) Resource Area (GRA). An overview of the mineral potential of the WSA is addressed in the Affected Environment section of the Wilderness Recommendations, Benton-Owens Valley/Bodie-Coleville Study Area EIS prepared in 1987. The EIS states that the WSA has a high resource potential for metallic minerals in the north margin of the WSA and a low resource potential for metallic minerals for the remainder of the area. The resource potentials for non-metallics and uranium are low. There is no resource potential for oil and gas. The geothermal resource occurrence potential is high for the entire 8,354 acres of the WSA ("Lands Valuable for Geothermal Resources", USGS unpublished map, revised 1985).

The mineral information in the EIS is supported by the BLM Bodie G-E-M report. This report includes extensive references and personal communications with mining companies active in the area.

The Mormon Meadow WSA encompassing 7,721 acres of public land is located five miles southwest of the Bodie mining district and approximately 13 miles south of the Masonic mining district. The general area is underlain by Tertiary lava flows, plugs, and pyroclastic deposits of principally dacitic composition. Pre-Tertiary metasedimentary rocks overlain by the Tertiary volcanics are exposed in a few places in the WSA. Production of gold and silver in the mining districts came from several systems of quartz veins. They are closely associated with hydrothermal alteration widespread in the mining districts. This hydrothermal alteration is common in the WSA.

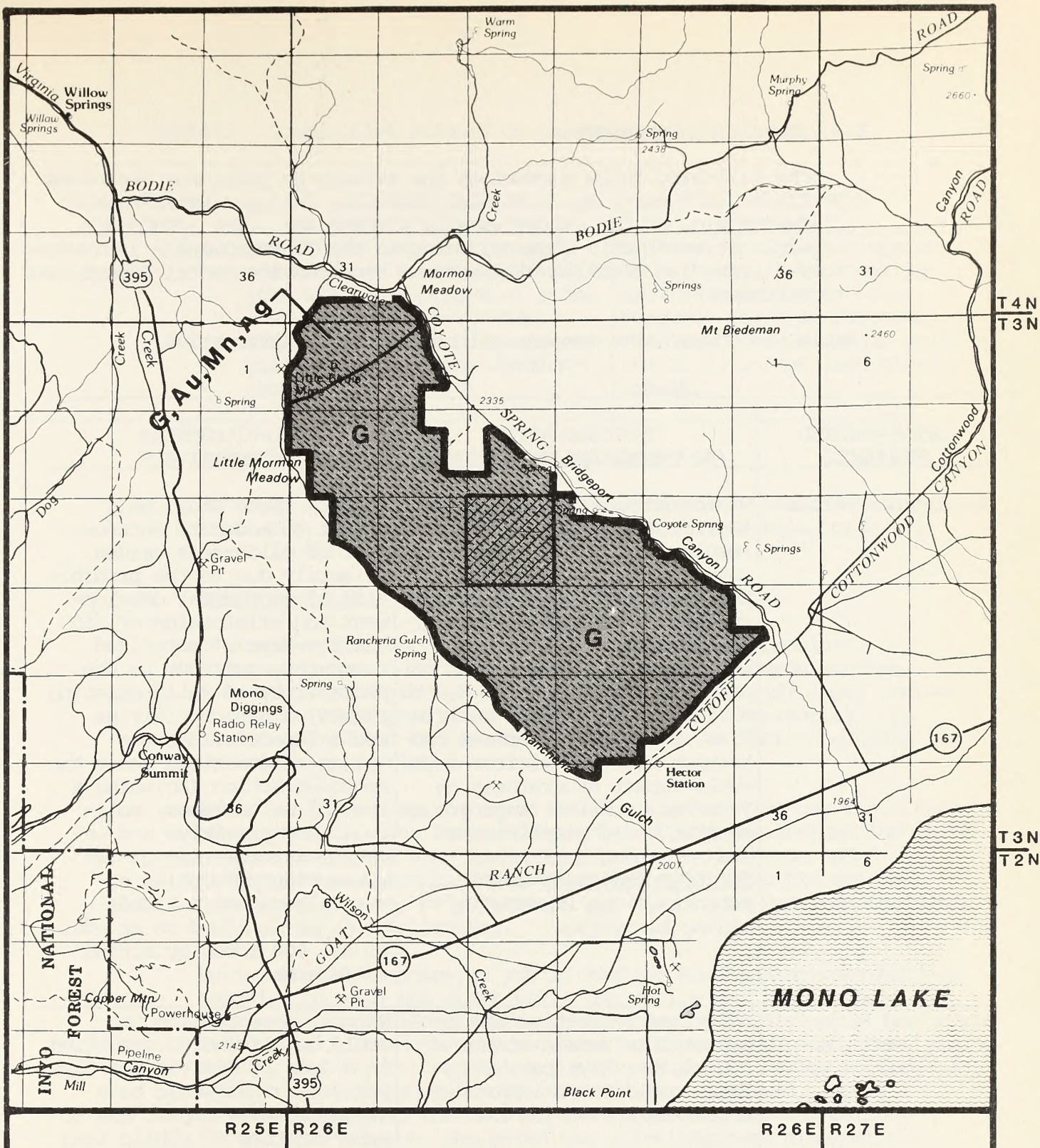
BLM records in 1983 identified approximately 30 mining claims in the high potential areas in the north margin of the WSA and a few pending geothermal lease applications around the southeast corner of WSA.

2. Summary of significant new mineral resource data collected since the suitability recommendation which should be considered in the final recommendation: Because this WSA was recommended non-suitable by BLM, no U.S. Geological Survey nor U.S. Bureau of Mines mineral surveys were conducted in this WSA. No new mineral data in the WSA has become available since the preparation of G-E-M report in 1983.

As of March, 1988, BLM records indicate the following distribution of unpatented mining claims in the WSA:

Table 4 - Mining Claims

	NO.			ACRES		
	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL
Mining Claims						
Lode	0	20	20	0	400	400
Placer	0	3	3	0	120	120
Mill Sites	0	1	1	0	5	5
Total	0	24	24	0	525	525



NONE Recommended for Wilderness

Recommended for Non Wilderness

Land outside WSA Recommended for Wilderness

Split Estate

State

Private

Explanation

High Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals

Moderate Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals

M Moderate Mineral Potential Location in a High Mineral Potential Area

H High Mineral Potential Location in a Moderate Mineral Potential Area

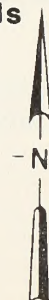
Commodity Symbols

Ag Silver

Au Gold

G Geothermal

Mn Manganese



**Mormon Meadows
Mineral Resource Potential**

0 1 2 3
MILES

Map-2
010-094

E. Impacts on Resources

The following table summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for all alternatives considered including designation or non-designation of the entire area as wilderness. (For a full explanation of this summary, refer to the Benton-Owens Valley/Bodie-Coleville Wilderness - Final Environmental Impact Statement.)

Table 5 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Wilderness Values	Mining activities and geothermal development would result in a direct loss of naturalness, solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation on 302 acres. The perception of naturalness and solitude would be impaired on an additional 500 acres due to mining and geothermal activities. Continued motorized recreation use (350 visitor-days) would impact naturalness on 10 acres. Critical sage grouse habitat would be eliminated due to mining activities. <u>Phacelia monoensis</u> could potentially be impacted by mining activities.	Overall there would be a slight to moderate enhancement of wilderness values primarily due to the prohibition of geothermal development and elimination of 350 visitor-days of motorized recreation use. Due to the probability of valid existing rights, mining activities would impact wilderness values as described under the Proposed Action including a loss of naturalness, solitude, and primitive and unconfined recreation on 210 acres. The perception of naturalness and solitude would be impaired on an additional 400 acres by mining activities.
Motorized Recreation Use	Motorized recreation use is expected to remain stable at 350 visitor-days per year. There would be no impacts on motorized recreation use.	Motorized recreation use would be eliminated resulting in a loss of 350 visitor-days per year. This would be a slight adverse impact due to opportunities on public land outside the WSA.

Table 5 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Geothermal Resource Development	Geothermal exploration and development could occur within the WSA. Development of a 50-Mw resource is projected. There would be no impacts on geothermal resource development.	Exploration and development of geothermal resources including a projected 50-Mw resource would be foregone. Over the long term this would result in a less than minor impact.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

During the inventory phase, a few comments were received addressing the need for utility-line expansion needs and the area's potential for geothermal resources. An additional comment stated that the area's low to moderate mineral potential, its roads, non-public lands, and mines combine to limit the WSA's wilderness potential.

After the inventory, comments were received during the wilderness study process. One comment supported wilderness designation while another noted the area's use for mineral exploration and development. A similar respondent indicated that the area's geothermal leases, private land, and structures impaired the WSA's suitability for wilderness.

During the study phase, a public meeting and hearing were held in association with the draft EIS. The public meeting was held in Markleeville, California; the public hearing in Bishop, California. Comments were received both orally through the hearing and in writing during the 90-day public review period. A total of 83 written and oral comments were received. Forty comments supported the Bureau's no-wilderness recommendation. Forty-three comments supported the all-wilderness alternative.

No Federal or State agency comments were received specific to this WSA.

During the inventory, Mono County provided a comment which noted that the multiple use values and non-public holdings within the WSA precluded wilderness designation of the area.

Mount Biedeman

CA-010-095

MT. BIEDEMAN WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CA-010-095)

1. THE STUDY AREA ---

13,146 acres

The Mt. Biedeman WSA is located in northeastern Mono County, approximately nine miles southeast of Bridgeport, California. The WSA includes 13,069 acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land, 77 acres of private inholdings, and no State land (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The northern boundary of the WSA follows the Bodie Road (State Highway 270) and non-public land northeast to Cottonwood Canyon Road. It follows this road south and then proceeds cross-country skirting the edge of an old mining area. It rejoins Cottonwood Canyon Road and a 60 kV powerline right-of-way south of Sugarloaf Mountain. The eastern boundary continues south and turns west following an irregular pattern of private land until it meets Bridgeport Canyon County Road. The boundary proceeds northwest along Bridgeport Canyon Road to private land in Mormon Meadow and then intersects with Bodie Road.

The WSA occupies the southwestern portion of the Bodie Hills, which lie along the western edge of the Basin and Range geomorphic province. The WSA is dominated by steep, rocky, and rounded volcanic hills with summit elevations ranging from approximately 8,000 to 9,022 feet. Mt. Biedeman, a rounded, brush-covered mountain (8,981 feet), and two adjoining mountains occupy the central portion of the WSA, while an arc of pinyon-juniper-covered hills and interspersed canyons ring the southern periphery of the WSA. A few drainages dissect the northeastern portion of the WSA. A few springs with associated meadows visually contrast with the surrounding arid environment. The WSA provides picturesque panoramic vistas of Mono Lake and the eastern Sierra, primarily from the southern portion of the unit. Vegetation in the WSA consists of pinyon-juniper associations located along the unit's southern boundary and a dense understory of shrubs which is uniformly located throughout the unit. Perennial grasses inhabit the meadow areas.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Various suitability recommendations were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) for the Benton-Owens Valley/Bodie-Coleville Wilderness Study Areas. A summary of the area's wilderness values was included in the Final EIS. Three different suitability recommendations were analyzed in the EIS: all wilderness, partial wilderness recommending approximately 71% of the area suitable, and no wilderness.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE ---

0	acres recommended for wilderness
13,069	BLM acres recommended for non-wilderness

No wilderness is the recommendation for this WSA. The entire acreage in this WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. The all-wilderness alternative is considered to be the environmentally preferred alternative as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The no-wilderness alternative will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The WSA is recommended non-suitable because its potential for mineral occurrence, motorized recreation, Bodie State Historic Park facility development, and potential emergency realignment needs for the adjoining State Highway 270 outweigh the area's marginal wilderness values. Manageability was an additional consideration in the non-suitable recommendation. Within this WSA, overall wilderness values are considered low in quality due to the lack of significant wilderness features unique to the region.

Resource conflicts in the WSA include high potential for metallic minerals in the northeastern and western portions of the WSA. This area contains 30 mining claims with moderate to high probability for valid existing rights. Development of mining claims which are found to have valid existing rights could impair the area's wilderness values with or without wilderness designation. The WSA also contains moderate to high potential for geothermal resources. Geothermal lease applications are pending along the WSA's northern boundary.

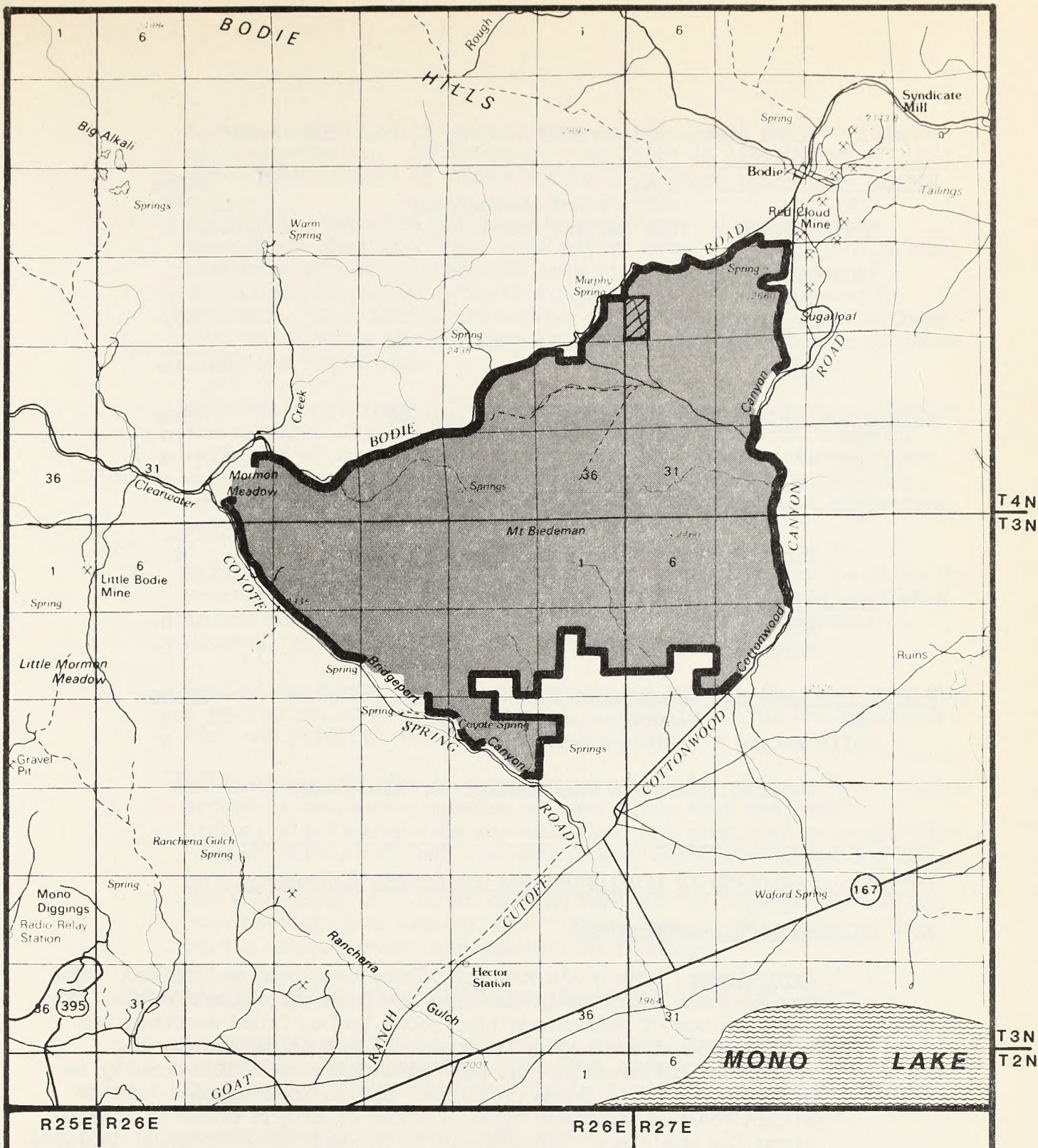
The WSA provides some opportunities for motorized recreational use. Approximately ten miles of primitive vehicle routes are located in the WSA. These routes are used primarily by hunters and sightseers in the non-winter season, and local snowmobilers during winter months. Recreation use is expected to remain stable.

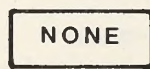


Bodie State Historic Park lies just outside the WSA and the Bodie State Historic Park Management Plan prescribes administrative facilities to be constructed in the northeastern portion of the WSA. These include an interpretive center, a 40-car parking lot, a dormitory, a park office, two residences, and one mile of new road.


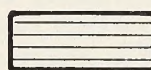

State Highway 270 is the northern boundary of the WSA. This paved road is used regularly and frequently by tourists who visit Bodie State Historic Park. Under emergency conditions such as flash flooding or road washouts, it could be necessary to reroute State Highway 270 up to 200 feet into the WSA.

The WSA's lack of natural barriers along portions of its boundaries and the potential for mining claim development in areas of high mineral value would make the WSA difficult to manage as wilderness.

The WSA contains wilderness values which are not considered significant or unique to the area. As a result, wilderness values are considered low and would provide little or no significant enhancement to the National Wilderness Preservation System.

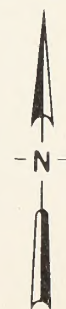


- | | | |
|---|---|----------------------------|
|  | NONE | RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS | |
|  | LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS | |

- | | |
|---|--------------|
|  | SPLIT ESTATE |
|  | STATE |
|  | PRIVATE |

**Mt. Biedeman
Proposal
MAP-1**

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JUNE, 1988

TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	13,069
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		77
Total		13,146
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Study Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	13,069
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		13,069

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The WSA's natural values have been maintained. The few man-made imprints in the area are generally unnoticeable. The WSA consists of volcanic hills, rocky knobs, broad meadows, and some ephemeral drainages. Most of the WSA is covered by big sagebrush, bitterbrush, and perennial grasses. Plant density is high. Low sage is found on ridges, and as interspersed islands within the big sagebrush type. A stand of pinyon trees is located along the WSA's southern boundary. The unit also contains isolated aspen groves.

The WSA's terrain, dense vegetation and size renders man-made imprints to a low level of visual contrast. These imprints include approximately 10 miles of primitive vehicle routes, a few reservoirs, pipelines, and a cherrystemmed road in the northeastern corner of the WSA. This road leads to some mining claims.

Livestock over-utilization in some wetland areas has resulted in site degradation. In addition, a wildfire in 1984 burned 150-200 acres northeastern of Coyote Spring.

2. Solitude: There are outstanding opportunities for solitude throughout the WSA. The rugged hills, scenic quality, and natural character of the unit provide area visitors with a sense of isolation and the opportunity to attain unconfined freedom of movement. The outside influences of vehicle use on State Highway 270, which forms the northern boundary of the WSA, impair solitude along the WSA's edge.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and unconfined recreation: Outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation are widely available in the WSA. These opportunities include hunting, backpacking, camping, nature appreciation, scenic photography, etc.
4. Special features: The WSA contains some special features including a population of Phacelia monoensis, which is on the United States Fish and Wildlife candidate species list.

In addition, the WSA includes several wildlife species such as sage grouse, a recovering species of game birds that has been historically over-harvested; mule deer and pronghorn antelope which rely on this intact natural environment for their forage and cover.

The WSA serves as crucial nesting habitat for sage grouse as well as a crucial deer fawning area. These game animals rely on the unit's natural cover for nesting and fawning.

B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS)

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 13,069 acres of the Intermountain Sagebrush/Great Basin Sagebrush ecosystem. The Mt. Biedeman WSA would not increase the diversity of the types of ecosystems represented in the NWPS.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush/ Great Basin Sagebrush	1	32,407	55	1,192,206
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush/ Great Basin Sagebrush	0	0	19	207,740

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of nine major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3 - Wilderness Opportunities for Residents of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>California</u>				
Chico	16	1,286,873	13	430,822
Fresno	35	4,048,852	28	460,790
Merced	33	3,957,550	25	348,753
Modesto	36	4,126,963	81	1,722,326
Sacramento	46	5,001,817	87	2,479,541
Stockton	35	4,061,833	46	601,496
Vallejo-Napa-Fairfield	44	4,832,667	74	2,100,862
Yuba City	44	4,951,805	85	2,495,500
<u>Nevada</u>				
Reno	39	4,647,230	170	6,904,809

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA is within 50 air miles of one BLM WSA recommended for wilderness designation. The Hoover Wilderness, 15 miles to the west, is the nearest designated wilderness area. This wilderness area is administered by the Toiyabe and the Inyo National Forests. Other nearby designated wilderness areas include Yosemite National Park

which is managed by the National Park Service, the Ansel Adams Wilderness which is managed by the Inyo National Forest, and the Carson-Iceberg Wilderness which is managed by the Toiyabe National Forest.

C. Manageability

Although the area is manageable as wilderness, it would be difficult due to a lack of easily identifiable boundaries along the southern edge, high metallic mineral potential with numerous mining claims in the northeastern and western portions of the WSA, and a cherry-stem mining intrusion allowing motorized vehicle access in the northeastern corner of the unit. The lack of vegetative and topographic barriers along the Bridgeport Canyon and Bodie Roads would make the WSA susceptible to indiscriminate off-highway vehicle use, particularly snowmobiles. Considerable signing, patrolling, and fencing would be required to prevent this use. Constant surveillance would be required to protect the area's wilderness values.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of information known at time of the preliminary suitability recommendation: The Mt. Biedeman WSA is in the Bodie Geology-Energy-Mineral (G-E-M) Resource Area (GRA). An overview of the mineral potential of the WSA is addressed in the Affected Environment section of the Wilderness Recommendations, Benton-Owens Valley/Bodie-Coleville Study Area EIS prepared in 1987. The EIS states that the WSA has a high resource potential for metallic minerals in the northeastern portion and extreme western portion of the WSA and a low resource potential for the remainder of the area. The development potential for metallic minerals in the northeast is high and in the extreme west is moderate. The resource potential for non-metallics and uranium is low. The thorium potential is nil. There is no resource potential for oil and gas. The geothermal resource potential is moderate to high for the entire WSA.

The mineral information in the EIS is supported by the BLM Bodie G-E-M report. This report includes extensive references and personal communications with mining companies active in the area.

The Mt. Biedeman WSA is located on the edge of the Bodie mining district and approximately 12 miles south-southeast of the Masonic mining district. The general area is underlain by Tertiary volcanic rocks of lava flows, plugs, and pyroclastic deposits of principally dacitic composition. Pre-Tertiary metasedimentary rocks overlain by the Tertiary volcanics are exposed in extreme western edge of the WSA. Production of gold and silver in the

mining districts came from several systems of quartz veins. They are closely associated with widespread hydrothermal alteration in the mining districts. This hydrothermal alteration is common in the WSA.

BLM records in 1983 identified approximately 28 mining claims in the high potential areas and a few pending geothermal lease applications along the northern boundary of WSA.

2. Summary of significant new mineral resource data collected since the suitability recommendation which should be considered in the final recommendation: Because this WSA was recommended non-suitable by BLM, no U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) nor U.S. Bureau of Mines (BOM) mineral surveys were conducted in this WSA. No new mineral data in the WSA has become available since the preparation of G-E-M report in 1983. Although California Division of Mines and Geology has a new publication in 1986 on the geology and ore deposits of the Bodie mining district and mining activity news indicated that exploratory/development activities in the surrounding areas of the Masonic mining district and Paramount mine, no additional new mineral data is available in the WSA.

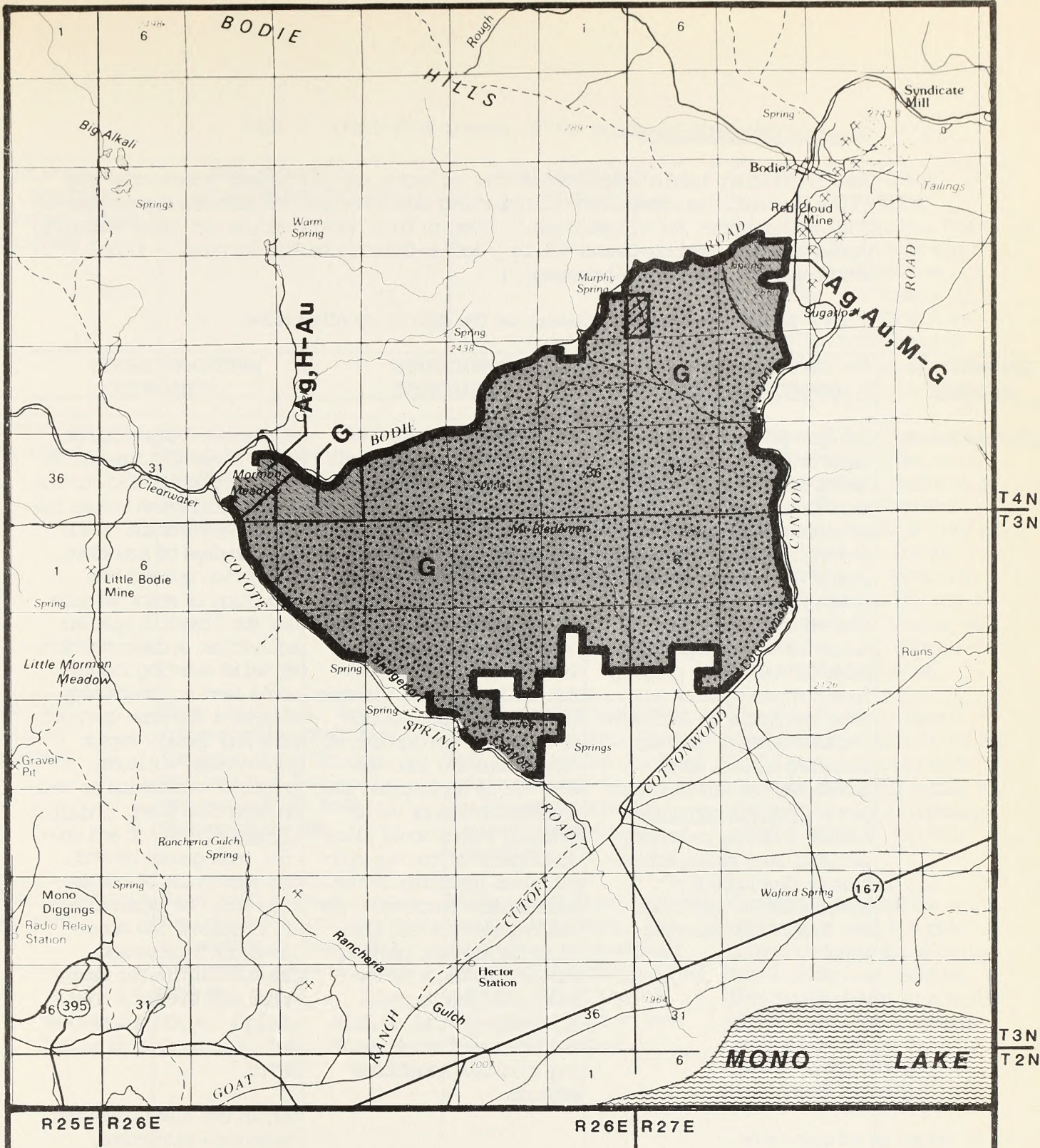
The current BOM's Mineral Industry Location System (MILS) record (May 2, 1988) was examined and the record showed graphite occurrence in sec. 32, T. 4 N., R. 26 E. The occurrence is of no significant economic importance.

Re-examination of the BLM mineral records discloses that sec. 31, T. 4 N., R. 26 E. was classified by the USGS as Bodie Known Geothermal Resources Area (KGRA) (Lands Valuable for Geothermal Resources, unpublished USGS map, updated 1985). There is one pending non-competitive geothermal lease application in the WSA covering 180 acres.

As of March, 1988, BLM records indicate the following distribution of unpatented mining claims in the WSA:

Table 4 - Mining Claims

TYPE	NO.			ACRES		
	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL
Mining Claims						
Lode	0	30	30	0	600	600
Placer	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mill Sites	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	30	30	0	600	600



Legend

NONE	Recommended for Wilderness
[Stippled Box]	Recommended for Non Wilderness
[Grid Box]	Land outside WSA Recommended for Wilderness
[Horizontal Lines Box]	Split Estate
[Vertical Lines Box]	State
[Diagonal Lines Box]	Private

Mt. Biedeman Mineral Resource Potential

Explanation

[Diagonal Lines Box]	High Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals
[Stippled Box]	Moderate Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals
M	Moderate Mineral Potential Location in a High Mineral Potential Area
H	High Mineral Potential Location in a Moderate Mineral Potential Area

0 1 2 3
MILES

Commodity Symbols

Ag	Silver
Au	Gold
G	Geothermal

Map-2
010-095

E. Impacts on Resources

The following table summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for all alternatives considered including designation or non-designation of the entire area as wilderness. (For a full explanation of this summary, refer to the Benton-Owens Valley/Bodie-Coleville Wilderness - Final Environmental Impact Statement.)

Table 5 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	PARTIAL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Wilderness Values	Two open-pit mining operations and geothermal development would directly impact naturalness, solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation on 690 acres and impair the perception of naturalness and solitude over an additional 950 acres. Livestock improvement projects would only slightly impair naturalness on a localized basis on less than 5 acres. Special features including crucial sage grouse habitat and sensitive plant (<i>Phacelia monoensis</i>) habitat could be moderately impacted from mining activities or development of administrative facilities for Bodie State Historic Park.	Wilderness designation of the entire WSA would result in a slight to moderate enhancement of long-term protection of wilderness values due to prohibition of geothermal development, elimination of 450 visitor days of motorized recreation use, the development of administrative facilities for the Bodie State Historic Park, and the prohibition of emergency realignment of State Route 270 into the WSA. It is anticipated that a determination of valid existing rights would allow development of the two open-pit mines resulting in the same impacts described under the Proposed Action. Livestock improvement projects and grazing would be the same as in the Proposed Action except that vehicle use would be limited resulting in slight beneficial effects.	Wilderness designation of 9,300 acres would result in low positive benefits to the area's wilderness values due to the elimination of 400 visitor-days of motorized recreation use and the reduction of motor vehicle use for livestock grazing activities. A determination of valid existing rights would lead to the development of a 210-acre open-pit mine and locally impact naturalness, solitude, primitive recreation as well as sensitive plant (<i>Phacelia monoensis</i>) habitat and crucial sage grouse habitat. The perception of naturalness would be impaired on an additional 350 acres. Livestock improvement projects within the designated portion would only slightly impact naturalness and solitude on a localized basis. Within the 3,845 acres not designated wilderness, mining and geothermal development would directly impact wilderness values on 480 acres and impair naturalness and solitude over an additional 600 acres. An increase of 100 visitor-days

Table 5 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	PARTIAL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Wilderness Values (continued)			of motorized recreation use would result in only minor impacts to naturalness and solitude. Development of administrative facilities for Bodie State Historic Park would moderately impact crucial sage grouse habitat.
Motorized Recreation Use	There would be no impact on motorized recreation use in the WSA. Use would continue and remain stable at 450 visitor-days.	Elimination of motorized recreation use in the WSA would result in a loss of 450 visitor-days. This would only be a minor impact due to the availability of opportunities outside the WSA.	Closure of 9,300 acres of the WSA to motorized recreation use would result in a loss of 400 visitor-days. This would result in only a minor impact due to the availability of opportunities outside the WSA and an increase of 100 visitor-days within the 3,845 acres not designated wilderness.
Recreational Facilities Development	There would be no impact. Administrative facilities for Bodie State Historic Park could be developed within the Bodie Bowl portion of the WSA.	Administrative facilities for the Bodie State Historic Park could not be developed within the WSA. There would be adverse impacts due to limited opportunities outside the WSA.	There would be no impact. Administrative facilities for Bodie State Historic Park could be developed within the Bodie Bowl in the nondesignated portion of the WSA.
Geothermal Resource Development	There would be no impacts. The entire WSA would be open for geothermal development including a potential 10-Mw resource.	Wilderness designation would preclude exploration and development of geothermal resources including a 10-Mw resource within the WSA. This would result in less than a minor impact.	Geothermal exploration and development would be precluded on 9,300 acres designated wilderness. However, this would result in a negligible impact due to only a moderate potential for geothermal resources with a low development potential. There would be no impact on geothermal development within the remaining 3,845 acres. Development of a 10-Mw resource is anticipated.

Table 5 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	PARTIAL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
State Route 270 Realignment	There would be no impacts. Realignment of State Route 270 could occur within the WSA.	Realignment of State Route 270 could not occur within the WSA resulting in a moderate adverse impact.	There would be no impact. The partial-wilderness boundary would establish a 200-foot-wide corridor for realignment of State Route 270.
Sage Grouse Strutting Grounds and Nesting Habitat	There would be a moderate impact as a result of the loss of two separate crucial habitat areas due to mining and the development of administrative facilities for Bodie State Historic Park.	There would be a moderate impact as a result of loss of crucial habitat area due to mining activities. Crucial habitat in the Bodie Bowl would be preserved as a result of prohibiting development of facilities for Bodie State Historic Park.	There would be a moderate impact as a result of the loss of the two separate crucial habitat areas described under the Proposed Action.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

During the inventory phase, a few comments were received addressing the need for utility line expansion and the area's potential for geothermal resources. An additional comment addressed the area's low to moderate mineral potential.

After the inventory, comments were received during the wilderness study process. Two comments supported wilderness designation while another noted the area's use for mineral exploration and development. A similar comment indicated that the area's geothermal leases, private land, structures, and KGRA designation precluded the area's suitability for wilderness.

During the study phase, a public meeting and public hearing were held in association with the draft EIS. The public meeting was held in Markleeville, California, and the public hearing in Bishop, California. Comments were received both orally through the hearing, and in writing during the 90-day public review period. A total of 83 written and oral comments were received. Thirty-three comments supported the Bureau's no-wilderness recommendation. Forty-three comments supported the all-wilderness alternative and seven comments supported the partial-wilderness alternative.

No comments specific to the Mt. Biedeman WSA were received from Federal agencies.

The California Department of Transportation has expressed the potential need for realignment of State Highway 270 (Bodie Road) during reconstruction to meet State Standards.

Mono County provided a comment which noted that the multiple use values and non-public lands of the WSA precluded wilderness designation of the area.

Bodie Mountain

CA-010-099

BODIE MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CA-010-099)

1. THE STUDY AREA ---

25,944 acres

The Bodie Mountains WSA is located in northeastern Mono County, approximately one mile west of Bridgeport, California. The WSA includes 23,934 acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land, 2,010 acres of private inholdings, and no State land (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The northern boundary of the WSA follows the Aurora Canyon county road, easterly skirting around an old material site and later on, private lands. At a ranching road, the boundary turns south and proceeds southeasterly until it reaches Bodie Road (State Highway 270). The boundary turns west and continues along this road. The boundary goes around private land as well as two cherrystemmed roads that lead to private inholdings. The boundary road heads north near U.S. Highway 395 and mostly follows private land and the Travertine Hot Springs Road until it intersects the Aurora Canyon county road.

The WSA occupies the west-central region of the Bodie Hills, which lie on the western margin of the Basin and Range geomorphic province, adjacent to and slightly within the eastern periphery of the Sierra Nevada geomorphic province. The WSA consists of rolling to steep and rocky volcanic hills with numerous canyons, interior drainages, low volcanic mesas, and some meadows. The elevation of surface features ranges from 7,500 feet in Big Alkali Basin to 9,300 feet along the eastern boundary of the unit. Big Alkali, thought to be a volcanic caldera, occupies the center of the unit. Big Alkali contains several hot springs and a sizeable wetland area. Additional springs are located in the WSA. Clark Canyon Creek is a perennial water source supporting trout. Vegetation is variable within the unit. Dominant throughout is grassland and various Great Basin shrub species. Pinyon-Juniper stands are prevalent along the western half of the WSA. Riparian corridors support dense stands of quaking Aspen. The unit's combination of natural features provides numerous scenic and picturesque vistas. The WSA occupies one of the more scenic portions of the Bodie Hills.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Various suitability recommendations were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) for the Benton-Owens Valley/Bodie-Coleville Wilderness Study Areas. A summary of the area's wilderness values was included in the Final EIS. Three different suitability recommendations were analyzed in the EISs: all wilderness, partial wilderness recommending 57% of the area suitable, and no wilderness.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE ---

0	acres recommended for wilderness
23,934	BLM acres recommended for non-wilderness

No wilderness is the recommendation for this WSA. The entire acreage in this WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. The all-wilderness alternative is considered to be the environmentally preferred alternative as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The no-wilderness alternative will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The WSA is recommended non-suitable because of its potential for mineral occurrence, motorized recreation needs, anticipated wildlife habitat improvement and livestock forage increases. Together with potential emergency realignment needs for adjoining State Highway 270, these aspects outweigh the area's wilderness values. Manageability was an additional consideration in the non-suitable consideration.

At the time the FEIS was published in 1987, resource conflicts in the WSA included moderate to high metallic mineral potential in Cinnabar and Hot Springs Canyons, moderate nonmetallic (sulphur) mineral potential in Cinnabar Canyon, moderate nonmetallic mineral potential for sand and gravel along the WSA's northwestern edge, and moderate to high geothermal potential throughout the WSA. The WSA contains approximately 305 mining claims. Mining claims in Cinnabar Canyon and Hot Springs Canyon have a moderate to high probability for determination of valid existing rights. Homestake Mining Company, U.S. Steel, and Amselco Mining Company have conducted active exploration in the Cinnabar Canyon area. A portion of the WSA contains pending geothermal lease applications. Geothermal development potential is high in the Travertine Hot Springs area and moderate in the majority of the WSA.

A 75-acre vegetative treatment (a prescribed burn) is proposed in Hot Springs Canyon to improve wildlife habitat and to increase livestock forage. The treatment has been prescribed because the existing plant community has reached a climax condition precluding the growth of a herbaceous understory which provides forage and cover for most wildlife species. Approximately 30 AUMs of additional forage would be provided for cattle. This vegetative treatment would be prohibited if the area is designated wilderness.

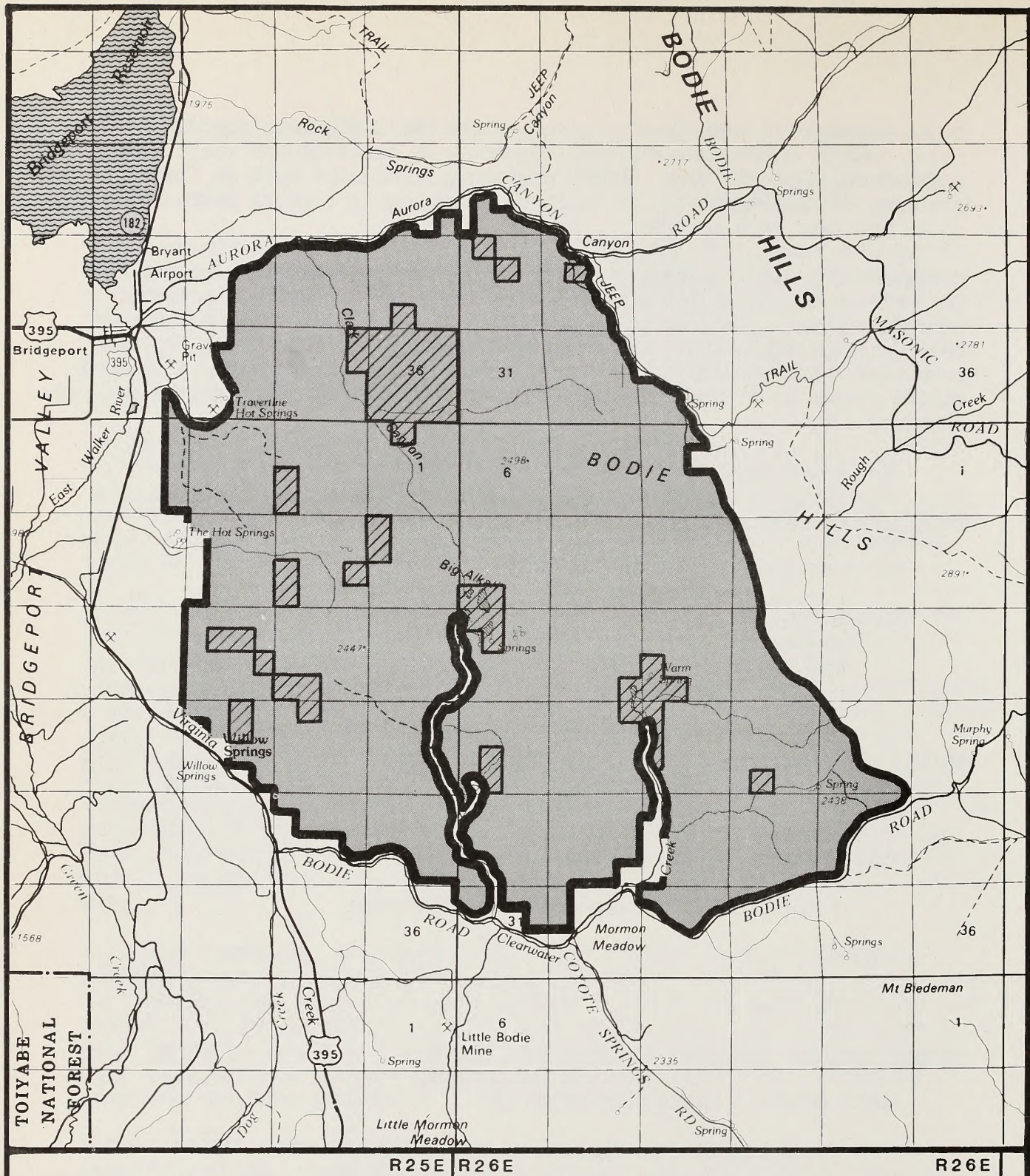
The WSA sustains and provides some suitable opportunities for motorized recreational use. Approximately 16 miles of primitive vehicle route are located in the WSA. The WSA is used by local snowmobilers during winter months. Hunters and sightseers use the primitive vehicle routes during non-winter months. Additionally, the Modesto Ridgerunners use these routes for their annual four-wheel drive poker rally sightseeing activity. It is expected that demand and use of this area for motorized recreational activities will continue.

State Highway 270 comprises portions of the WSA's southern boundary. This paved road is used regularly and frequently by tourists who visit nearby Bodie State Historic Park. Under emergency conditions such as flash flooding or road washouts, it could be necessary to reroute State Route 270 up to 200 feet into the WSA.




Manageability was a secondary factor in the non-suitable recommendation. The primary manageability limitation consists of the numerous private inholding parcels located throughout the WSA as well as the two southern cherrystemmed roads that lead to private land in the WSA. Finally, the potential for determination of valid existing rights associated with some mining claims in areas of favorable mineral occurrence may completely impede manageability.

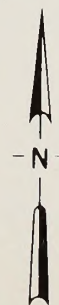
TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	23,934
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		2,010
Total		<u>25,944</u>
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Study Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<u>0</u>
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	23,934
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>23,934</u>



- | | | |
|---|---|----------------------------|
|  | NONE | RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS | |
|  | LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS | |

- | | |
|---|--------------|
|  | SPLIT ESTATE |
|  | STATE |
|  | PRIVATE |



**Bodie Mountains
Proposal
MAP-1**

0 1 2 3
MILES

010-099
JUNE, 1988

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: Overall, the unit's naturalness has been well maintained. The WSA consists of rocky volcanic hills with numerous canyons, volcanic mesas, and some meadows. Elevation ranges from 7,500 feet to 9,300 feet. Big Alkali Basin, believed to be a volcanic caldera, occupies the center of the WSA and appears as a soft-colored grassy meadow complex enclosed by a ring of small tree-covered hills. Numerous springs are located in the unit. Hot Springs and Clark Creek Canyons are especially scenic.

The western half of the WSA contains a pinyon-juniper woodland with big sagebrush in the bottomlands. In the northeastern corner there are numerous stands of quaking aspen. The WSA's eastern half is rolling mountainous terrain with the bottoms and sideslopes covered with big sagebrush, bitterbrush, and perennial grasses. Low sagebrush is found on the ridgetops and as interspersed islands within the big sagebrush. The WSA contains a sphagnum peat bog which is unusual for this area.

Although there are cherrystemmed roads which penetrate the WSA from the southern boundary, the unit's large size and extremely diverse terrain screen these intrusions. Excessive livestock use in some wetland areas has degraded site conditions. In Clark Canyon, gabions have been constructed to correct unnatural site conditions. In addition, other evidence of man's influence include approximately 16 miles of vehicle routes, a pipeline, six fences, two reservoirs, and mining claims. These features are substantially unnoticeable in the WSA as a whole.

2. Solitude: The unit's blend of physiographic variation, vegetative screening, and extensive size provides the visitor with outstanding opportunities for solitude. Isolation can be easily found within most of the WSA. The use of cherrystemmed roads would impair opportunities for solitude along southern portions of the unit.

This WSA is periodically overflown by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and unconfined recreation: The primeval and diverse nature of the unit's natural character provides visitors with outstanding opportunities to participate in primitive and unconfined recreational activities. Visitors can participate in activities such as backpacking, cross-country skiing, nature appreciation, scenic photography, camping, horseback riding, etc.

4. Special features: The area contains diverse features of special interest. Historic features associated with Bodie State Historic Park include the first transmission line to transport electricity over a long distance and a Chinese settlement. The WSA lies in the heart of the Bodie Hills obsidian source, and most of the sites occurring here are associated with prehistoric obsidian collection.

The unit also contains two small populations of Phacelia monoensis, a candidate species for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service sensitive plant list. The WSA contains a unique sphagnum peat bog which is 60 feet in diameter and in excellent condition.

The WSA provides habitat for several wildlife species such as sage grouse, a recovering species of game birds that has been historically over-harvested; mule deer and pronghorn antelope which rely on this intact natural environment for forage and cover. The unit serves as crucial nesting habitat for sage grouse as well as crucial habitat for deer and pronghorn fawning. Waterfowl are also in the unit.

B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS)

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 12,740 acres of the Intermountain Sagebrush/Great Basin Sagebrush and 11,194 acres of the Intermountain Sagebrush Juniper-Pinyon woodlands ecosystem. The Bodie Mountains WSA would not increase the diversity of the types of ecosystems represented in the NWPS.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush/				
Great Basin Sagebrush	1	32,407	55	1,192,525
Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	4	81,301	74	2,140,109
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush/				
Great Basin Sagebrush	0	0	19	208,059
Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	3	61,701	18	354,639

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of nine major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3 - Wilderness Opportunities for Residents of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>California</u>				
Chico	16	1,286,873	13	430,822
Fresno	35	4,048,852	28	460,790
Merced	33	3,957,550	25	348,753
Modesto	36	4,126,963	81	1,722,326
Sacramento	46	5,001,817	87	2,479,541
Stockton	35	4,061,833	46	601,496
Vallejo-Napa-Fairfield	44	4,832,667	74	2,100,862
Yuba City	44	4,951,805	85	2,459,500
<u>Nevada</u>				
Reno	39	4,647,230	170	6,904,809

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA is within 50 air miles of one BLM WSA recommended for wilderness designation. The Hoover Wilderness, 15 miles to the west, is the nearest designated wilderness area. This wilderness area is administered by the Toiyabe and the Inyo National Forests. Other nearby designated wilderness areas include Yosemite National Park which is managed by the National Park Service, the Ansel Adams Wilderness is managed by the Inyo National Forest, and the Carson-Iceberg Wilderness which is managed by the Toiyabe National Forest.

C. Manageability

Although the area is manageable as wilderness, it may be difficult due to the numerous private parcel inholdings scattered in the unit. Although no developments are foreseen on these private parcels, incompatible uses on these areas could limit future wilderness management. The two southern cherrystemmed roads that lead to private inholdings are used by miners and livestock operators and present an additional limitation to effective wilderness management.

Finally, the WSA may be altogether unmanageable as wilderness if mining claims in areas of moderate to high mineral occurrence (Hot Springs and Cinnabar Canyons) result in a determination of valid existing rights for mining claimants. The probability is moderate to high that this may occur. Wilderness values of naturalness, solitude and opportunities for primitive recreation experiences would be permanently impaired if these mining claims are developed.

Some signing, patrolling and fencing of the WSA would be required to maintain the area's natural integrity. Purchase of the private inholdings would be needed in order to enhance wilderness manageability.

D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of information known at the time of the preliminary suitability recommendation: The Bodie Mountains WSA is within the BLM Bodie Geology - Energy - Minerals (G-E-M) Resource Area (GRA). The G-E-M data as supplemented by the Analysis of Management Situation (WSA File #CA-010-099, 1984). This data is summarized in the Affected Environment section of the 1987 Wilderness Recommendations Benton-Owens Valley/Bodie-Coleville Study Area EIS. The EIS states that the WSA has potential for occurrence of gold, sulphur, mercury, antimony and geothermal resources.

The supplemented G-E-M data indicate that the WSA has an area of high potential for metallic minerals in the southern portion of the WSA, and an area of moderate potential in the western portion of the WSA.

The southern area (Cinnabar Canyon) is rated as having a high potential for the occurrence of gold (Au), mercury (Hg), antimony (Sb) and sulphur (S). This rating is based in part on the presence of the Wedertz Quicksilver Mine (or Cal-Mono Mine) in Cinnabar Canyon. This property produced a small amount of mercury in the early 1900s, however, production records were not found. A large quantity of massive stibnite (antimony ore) also occurs in this area. Homestake Mining Company first started exploring this area for gold in 1980. By 1984, they had completed 2,768 feet of exploration drill holes. Although gold was present, no ore grade precious metal concentrations were found during this exploration. Instead, high grade native sulphur mineralization was discovered. Sulphur is a nonmetallic locatable mineral.

The western area (Hot Springs Canyon) is rated as having a moderate potential for the occurrence of gold. This rating is based on the large area of rock alteration in this area with some gold values associated with it. At the time of recommendation, Homestake Mining Company was actively pursuing this target.

As of spring 1986, 348 unpatented mining claims were located within the WSA.

There is a small area of moderate potential for the nonmetallic minerals sand and gravel along the western edge of the WSA. This classification is based on the known presence of sand and gravel in this area, although the quality and useability of this material is unknown. This small area is not mentioned in the EIS. Homestake Mining Company's discovery of elemental sulphur in

Cinnabar Canyon (mentioned above) resulted in the classification of the Cinnabar Canyon alteration zone as moderate for non-metallics.

Most of the WSA has a high potential for geothermal resources. The portion of the WSA not having high potential is classified as having moderate potential (northeast edge). These ratings are based on the abundance of hot springs and wells in the area and the strong evidence of favorable geologic environments. This area is shown to be prospectively valuable for geothermal resources. ("Lands Valuable for Geothermal Resources", C.H. Godwin and others, USGS unpublished map, updated July 1985).

Geothermal-production well-drilling in the Travertine Springs area has intersected a thermal reservoir hot enough for direct heating applications and possibly hot enough for a small amount of electrical generation. The moderate potential area is in the same favorable geologic environment as described above. The EIS states that a substantial portion of the WSA contains pending geothermal lease applications.

2. Summary of significant new mineral data collected since the suitability recommendation which should be considered in the final recommendation: No U.S. Bureau of Mines (BOM) or U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) mineral reports were prepared for this WSA. There are five geothermal applications covering 6,643 acres of the WSA. A portion of the KGRA exists in the WSA and occupies 300 acres.

Homestake Mining Company submitted additional information regarding their Cinnabar Canyon, Hot Springs Canyon, and Potato Peak prospects in May of 1988. The accompanying map shows areas of altered mineral occurrence potential based on additional data received since the FEIS was printed in 1987.

Cinnabar Canyon

As stated in Section D.1., Homestake discovered a deposit of elemental sulphur in 1983 and 1984 while exploring for precious metals in the area. Amselco, a mining corporation, then entered into a partnership on this property. During August of 1986 through January 1987, Amselco completed an additional 7,715 feet of evaluation drilling. Soil and rock sampling, and geological mapping were also done during this time. The data indicate a moderately continuous northwest-trending sulphur lens, measuring about 900 feet wide, at least 1,800 feet long and over 200 feet thick. Over 15 million tons of 18%+ elemental sulphur is estimated.

Based on this data, the classification of the Cinnabar Canyon alteration zone is increased from moderate to high potential for occurrence of non-metallics (sulphur).

Homestake renewed their interest in the Hot Springs Canyon alteration zone after the discovery of the Cinnabar Canyon sulphur deposit. No confirmation drilling has been done yet, but, the alteration geochemistry indicates a strong similarity to and perhaps a connection with the Cinnabar Canyon deposit. Based on this data, the classification of the Hot Springs Canyon alteration zone is increased from low to moderate potential for occurrence of non-metallics (sulphur).

Potato Peak

Homestake completed 1,600 feet of exploration drilling (eight holes) in the area in 1986. Results indicate a cloud of a few tenths ounces/ton gold below and around the surface geochemical anomaly. Rare assays of a few tenths ounces/ton gold were present and one five foot interval assayed 0.128 ounces/ton gold. The surface anomaly and area of drilling are outside the WSA and are confined to a small area approximately 1,500 feet by 1,000 feet. The above data is not enough to change the existing classification of low potential of occurrence for metallics within this portion of the WSA.

A review of BIM records in May of 1988 indicate that approximately 50% of the WSA is still covered by geothermal lease applications.

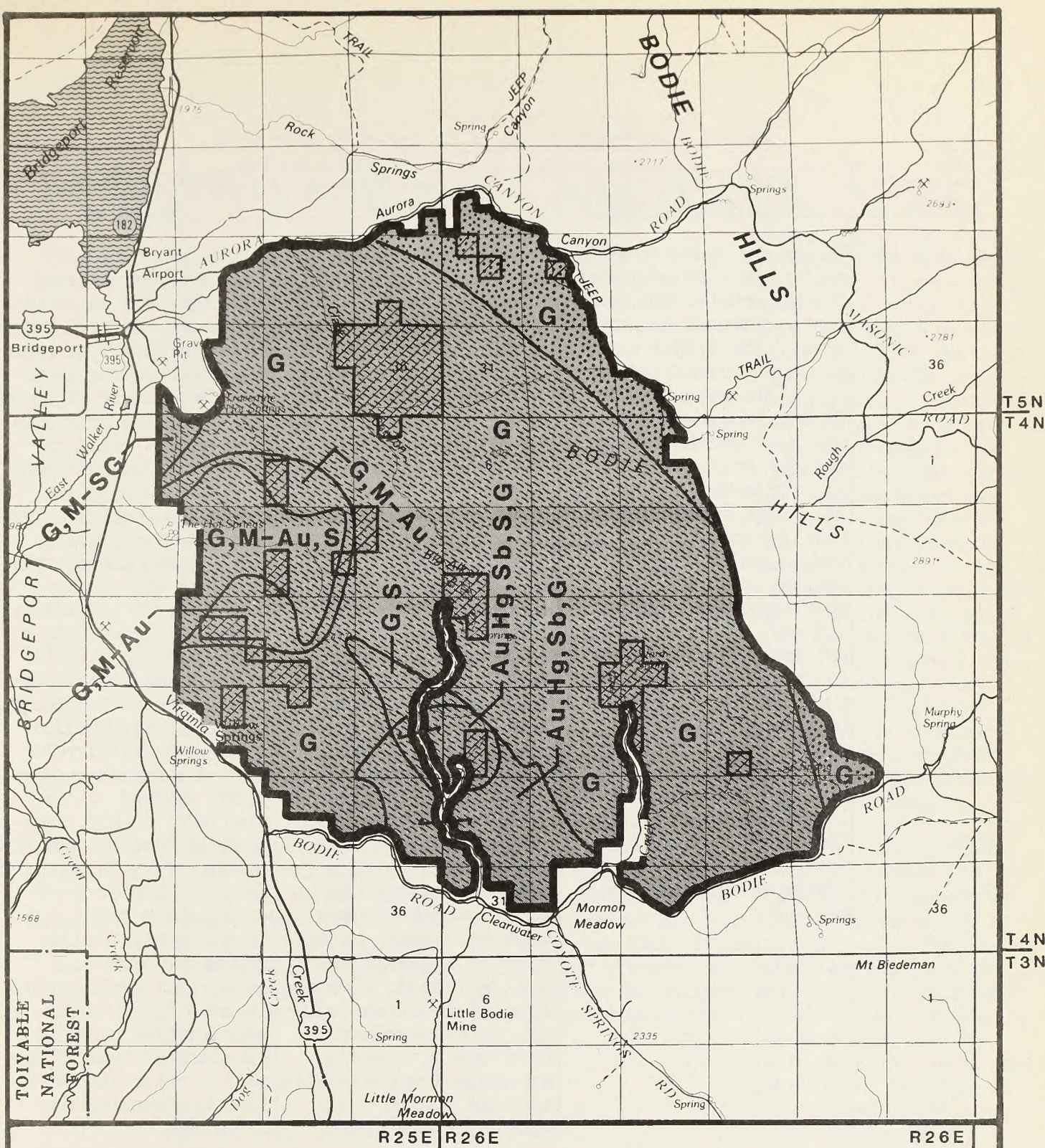
The distribution of unpatented mining claims in the WSA is summarized in the following table taken from BIM records dated May, 1988:

Table 4 - Mining Claims

TYPE	NO.			ACRES		
	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL
Mining Claims						
Lode	0	300	300	0	6,000	6,000
Placer	0	5	5	0	20	20
Mill Sites	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	305	305	0	6,200	6,200

E. Impacts on Resources

The following table summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for all alternatives considered including designation or non-designation of the entire area as wilderness. (For a full explanation of this summary, refer to the Benton-Owens Valley/Bodie-Coleville Wilderness - Final Environmental Impact Statement.)



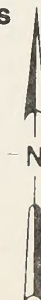
NONE	Recommended for Wilderness
	Recommended for Non Wilderness
	Land outside WSA Recommended for Wilderness
	Split Estate
	State
	Private

Explanation

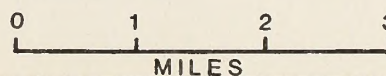
	High Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals
	Moderate Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals
M	Moderate Mineral Potential Location in a High Mineral Potential Area
H	High Mineral Potential Location in a Moderate Mineral Potential Area

Commodity Symbols

Au	Gold
G	Geothermal
Hg	Mercury
S	Sulphur
Sb	Antimony
SG	Sand & Gravel



Bodie Mountains
Mineral Resource Potential



Map-2
010-099

Table 5 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	PARTIAL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Wilderness Values*	<p>The primary impacts to wilderness values would originate from projected mineral development activities expected to occur in the Cinnabar Canyon area and geothermal development in the western quarter of the WSA. An open-pit sulphur mine and a geothermal power facility would disturb 460 acres of surface and directly impair naturalness, solitude, primitive and unconfined recreation, and some special features of the WSA. A proposed vegetative treatment (probably a prescribed burn) and physical improvement of two primitive vehicle routes would adversely impact naturalness and solitude to varying degrees. In addition, potential emergency realignment needs for State Route 270 would necessitate repair and rerouting of the road into the WSA resulting in adverse effects to naturalness and solitude.</p>	<p>The net effect of the management actions under the All Wilderness Alternative would be a slight to moderate enhancement of long-term protection to wilderness values. Closure of the area to motor vehicle use, prohibition of physical improvements to existing vehicle routes, prohibition of geothermal development, prohibition of potential emergency realignment needs for State Route 270, and a decrease in vehicle use associated with fuelwood cutting, wetland habitat improvements, piñon nut collection, and grazing operations would provide some benefits to the area's wilderness values. Foregone geothermal development would provide the greatest benefits to wilderness. It is anticipated that the high probability of valid existing rights determination for mining claims in Cinnabar Canyon would result in development of an open-pit sulphur mine. As a result, wilderness values of naturalness, solitude, primitive and unconfined types of recreation, and special features would be adversely impacted on 420 acres in Cinnabar Canyon.</p>	<p>Designation of the 9,790 acres as wilderness would primarily result in low benefits to the area's wilderness values particularly to naturalness and solitude due to the elimination of 400 annual visitor use days related to motor vehicle access, enhancement of wetland values of three springs and one meadow, the slight reduction of vehicle use related to grazing operations and maintenance of some grazing facilities, the prohibition of physical improvements to 1-3/4 miles of a primitive vehicle route in the designated area's southwestern portion, and the prohibition of fuelwood cutting on 300 acres of accessible piñon-juniper woodland. On the other hand, the high probability of determining valid existing rights for mining claims in Cinnabar Canyon would probably result in a 420-acre open-pit sulphur mine in this area. As a result, this operation would adversely impact naturalness, solitude, primitive and unconfined types of recreation, and special features in a localized area of the unit.</p>

*Since the last summary table was prepared, new minerals data has been obtained from Homestake Mining Co. which may affect the degree of impacts to wilderness values. Refer to the Minerals section of this document.

Table 5 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	PARTIAL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
			On the 16,685 acres not designated as wilderness, there would be high adverse impacts to wilderness values from the projected development of a 40-acre geothermal power facility in the western quarter of the WSA, particularly around the Travertine Hot Springs area. In addition, there would be less significant adverse impacts to wilderness values from potential emergency needs for realignment of State Route 270 along a corridor 200 feet north of the boundary road. Fuelwood cutting, motorized vehicle access and physical improvements to a primitive vehicle route (1 1/4 miles) would be allowed resulting in additional adverse impacts to wilderness values of naturalness and solitude.
Motorized Recreation Use	There would be no impacts on motorized recreation use as the entire WSA would remain open for use. Motorized recreation use is anticipated to remain stable at the current 900 visitor days.	Wilderness designation would close the entire 25,944 acres within the WSA to motorized recreation use and eliminate 900 visitor use days. Impacts on motorized recreation use would be minor due to opportunities available outside the WSA.	The impacts on motorized recreation use would be minor due to opportunities outside the WSA as well as increased use of the non-wilderness portion of the WSA. While 400 visitor days would be eliminated from the designated area, an increase of 200 visitor days of motorized recreation use is projected for the non-wilderness portion.
Geothermal Resource Development	There would be no impacts on geothermal resource development. The entire WSA would be available for geothermal development including a projected 10-Mw resource.	Exploration and development of geothermal resources within the WSA, including a potential 10-Mw resource, would be foregone. Over the long term this would result in less than a minor impact.	Precluding geothermal resource development on the 9,790 acres of the WSA designated wilderness would result in only a negligible impact with no projected development foregone. Geo-

Table 5 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	PARTIAL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
			thermal exploration and development could occur within the remaining 9,790 acres of the WSA not designated wilderness which includes a potential 10-Mw resource. There would be no impact on geothermal resource development within the nonwilderness portion of the WSA.
Cultural Resources	Surface-disturbing activities associated with potential geothermal development would likely only result in minor impacts to cultural resources in areas of predicted very high sensitivity. Surface inventories to develop mitigation measures to minimize impacts would be required.	There would be minor positive benefits to cultural resources due to precluding geothermal resource development and continued motorized recreation use.	In the 9,790 acres of the WSA not designated wilderness, surface-disturbing activities associated with geothermal resource development would likely only result in minor impacts to cultural resources. Surface inventories would be required to develop mitigation measures to minimize impacts. There would be a low positive benefit to cultural resources within the 16,685 acres designated wilderness.
State Route 270 Realignment	Realignment of State Route 270 could occur into the WSA. There would be no impacts on the realignment of State Route 270.	Wilderness designation would limit opportunities and increase costs for emergency realignment of State Route 270 by precluding use of the WSA. This would result in a potential moderate adverse impact.	There would be no impact on the realignment of State Route 270. The Partial Wilderness Alternative boundary establishes a 200-foot-wide corridor along 3 1/2 miles of the roadway for reconstruction. The remaining 1 1/4 miles follow the WSA boundary along the nonwilderness portion and would not be impacted.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

During the inventory phase, a few comments addressed mineral values and geothermal potential. Several other comments supported wilderness designation of the area, noting flora, fauna, scenic views, and other special features.

After the inventory, several comments were received during the wilderness study process. A few comments identified high geothermal values in the area and others noted a favorable geologic environment for mineral deposits. One comment indicated that non-public inholdings and access routes negated wilderness values. A rancher expressed the need for access to his grazing operations.

During the study phase, a public meeting and public hearing were held in association with the draft EIS. The public meeting was held in Markleeville, California and the public hearing in Bishop, California. Comments were received both orally through the hearing and in writing during the 90-day public review period. A total of 80 written and oral comments were received. Thirty-one comments supported the Bureau's no-wilderness recommendation, forty-two comments supported the all-wilderness alternative, and seven comments supported the partial-wilderness alternative.

No comments specific to the Bodie Mountains WSA were received from Federal agencies.

The California Department of Transportation has expressed the potential need for realignment of State Highway 270 (Bodie Road) during reconstruction to meet State standards.

During the inventory, Mono County expressed a need for multiple use of the area.

Bodie

CA-010-100

BODIE WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CA-010-100)

1. THE STUDY AREA --- 16,814 acres

The Bodie Wilderness Study area is located in northeastern Mono County, approximately nine miles east of Bridgeport, California. The WSA includes 16,482 acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land, 332 acres of private inholdings, and no State land (see Map 1 and Table 1).

A review of the map reveals a WSA configuration that is irregular and convoluted. The northern boundary begins on the Toiyabe National Forest border and proceeds in an easterly direction along the Halfway Camp Road and private land. The boundary turns south at the Mono County line and then irregularly follows Bodie Road and private land. The boundary generally turns west along Bodie Road and continues along the road bypassing Bodie State Historic Park until it reaches Geiger Grade. The boundary heads north along the Geiger Grade, private land, and the road to Halfway Camp before it returns to the edge of the Toiyabe National Forest.

The WSA occupies the northeastern quarter of the Bodie Hills. The Bodie Hills lie on the western margin of the Basin and Range geomorphic province, adjacent to and slightly within the eastern periphery of the Sierra Nevada geomorphic province. The unit is dominated by rocky, rounded, volcanic hills ranging in elevation from 7,600 feet to 9,200 feet. Undoubtedly the most scenic portion of the Bodie Hills, this unit provides a variety of landform features that are visually outstanding. Several perennial creeks have carved deep and narrow canyons in the western two-thirds of the unit. The Atastra and Rough Creek drainages provide spectacular and striking scenery of meandering creeks in abrupt and colorful canyons. Several spring sources and associated wetland habitats can be found in the area adding additional scenic variety. The Dry Lakes plateau dominated by the 9,000-foot cinder cone, Beauty Peak, occupies the northeastern portion of the WSA. Beauty Peak and the surrounding plateau contrast sharply with the subdued relief of surrounding terrain, particularly during twilight hours. Vegetation in the unit includes common Great Basin shrubs with pinyon-juniper associations on upland slopes and canyon walls. Quaking aspen and willows line drainages with permanent water sources. The unit also provides wetland habitat for a diverse range of wildlife.

Varied topography, wetland values, and a highly primitive environment combine together to make this portion of the Bodie Hills the most scenic in the area.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Various suitability recommendations were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) for the Benton-Owens Valley/Bodie-Coleville Wilderness Study Areas. A summary of the area's wilderness values was included in the Final EIS. Three different

suitability recommendations were analyzed in the EISs: all wilderness, partial wilderness recommending approximately 41% of the area suitable, and no wilderness.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE ---

0 acres recommended
for wilderness
16,482 BIM acres recommended
for non-wilderness

No wilderness is the recommendation for this WSA. The entire acreage in this WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. The all-wilderness alternative is considered to be the environmentally preferred alternative as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The no-wilderness alternative will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The WSA is recommended nonsuitable because its potential for mineral occurrence and motorized recreation needs outweigh the area's wilderness values. Manageability was a secondary consideration in the nonsuitable recommendation.

The major resource conflict in the WSA is the area's high potential for mineral occurrence. The unit contains several hundred mining claims and most of the WSA contains moderate to high metallic mineral potential. Development of mining claims which are found to have valid existing rights could impair the area's wilderness values with or without wilderness designation. Mineral exploration activity has occurred in the Paramount Mine area and in the Beauty Peak/Dry Lakes Plateau. There is moderate to high potential for determination of valid existing rights on mining claims associated with the moderate to high metallic mineral potential. Moderate potential exists for geothermal resources; the western portion of the WSA contains pending geothermal lease applications.

The WSA sustains and provides opportunities for motorized recreation. Approximately 18 miles of primitive vehicle routes are located in the WSA. The WSA is used by local snowmobilers during winter months. Hunters, rockhounds, and sightseers use these primitive vehicle routes during non-winter months. Additionally, the Modesto Ridgerunners use these routes for their annual four-wheel drive poker rally/sightseeing event. It is expected that demand and use of this area for motorized recreational activities will continue.

Manageability was a tertiary factor in the nonsuitable recommendation. The primary manageability limitation consists of the highly irregular configuration of the WSA as well as two cherrystemmed roads leading to private lands and mining claims. Finally, the moderate to high potential for determination of valid existing rights associated with mineral claims in moderate to high metallic mineral areas may completely impede wilderness manageability.

TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	16,482
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		332
Total		16,814
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Study Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	16,482
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		16,482

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The unit has retained its overall primeval character and influence with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable. The western two-thirds of the unit consists of rocky, steep volcanic hills reaching summits of 9,200 feet. This area has been incised by several perennial creeks which have exposed colorful and dramatic rock formations. Rough Creek drainage is especially scenic. Atastra Creek, Milk Ranch Canyon, and Halfway Camp also add striking scenic value to the unit.

The eastern third of the WSA is dominated by the Beauty Peak/Dry Lakes plateau. Beauty Peak, a volcanic cinder cone, rises abruptly (9,018 feet) above the broad tabular Dry Lakes area providing a different landform feature to the WSA. Only the southwestern aspect of Beauty Peak lies within the WSA.

Most of the bottomlands and sideslopes are covered by big sagebrush, bitterbrush, and perennial grasses. Plant density is high. Low sage is found on the ridges and as interspersed islands within the sagebrush, displaying a mottled appearance. There are dry and wet meadows in major drainages and around springs. The western slope of Rough Creek and the dry rocky ridges support stands of pinyon-juniper. The deep drainages have numerous stands of aspen.

Unnatural features are visible on a local basis, but are small in magnitude in relation to the unit's size and topographic diversity. Unimproved, primitive vehicle routes totaling approximately 18 miles are in the area. A cherry-stemmed road leading to Paramount Mine exists in the western portion of the WSA. Some old mining prospects and associated surface disturbances dot this area. A few wildlife enclosures sit along the western edge of the WSA near Geiger Grade Road. Several miles of fence traverse the unit.

The variety of geology, aesthetic values, wetland values, and a rugged natural environment are contributing factors which make this WSA the most scenic in the Bodie Hills.

2. Solitude: The unit's varied terrain, extensive size, and vegetative diversity cumulatively provide outstanding opportunities for solitude. The deep canyons of Atastra Creek, Rough Creek and others enhance opportunities to get away from it all. The rugged and primeval nature of Beauty Peak and the Dry Lakes plateau heightens a visitor's feeling of desolation.

This WSA may be overflowed in the future by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission during approved military operations. The visual intrusions and associated noise create temporary effects on solitude which are deemed acceptable and necessary as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and unconfined recreation: The area contains abundant opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation. The Bodie Hills are reputedly known for their sage grouse hunting; this area of the Bodie Hills is one of the most popular. Hunters from all areas of California and portions of western Nevada hunt the area during open season. In addition, the area provides visitors with opportunities for camping, historical sightseeing, geological sightseeing, wildlife study, backpacking, cross-country skiing, and horseback riding. The WSA is also quite popular with rockhounds.
4. Special features: The WSA is known for its diversity of wildlife. Sage grouse, a recovering species of game birds that has been historically over-harvested; mule deer and pronghorn antelope are

all wildlife species which rely on this intact natural environment for their forage and cover. The unit serves as crucial nesting habitat for sage grouse as well as crucial habitat for deer and pronghorn fawning.

The unit contains a presence of Astragalus johannis-howellii (State-listed "rare"), and Phacelia monoensis, which is on the United States Fish and Wildlife Service candidate species list. Two major populations of Astragalus johannis-howellii exist with plants numbering in the thousands. The habitat is stable. One population of Phacelia monoensis exists. The population consists of sixty plants. The stability of the populations is unknown. In addition, a unique sphagnum peat bog is located in the unit.

B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System
(NWPS)

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 16,814 acres of the Intermountain Sagebrush/Great Basin Sagebrush ecosystem. The Bodie WSA would not increase the diversity of the types of ecosystems represented in the NWPS.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush/ Great Basin Sagebrush	1	32,407	55	1,188,793
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush/ Great Basin Sagebrush	0	0	19	204,327

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of nine major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3 - Wilderness Opportunities for Residents of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>California</u>				
Chico	16	1,286,873	13	430,822
Fresno	35	4,048,852	28	460,790
Merced	33	3,957,550	25	348,753
Modesto	36	4,126,963	81	1,722,326
Sacramento	46	5,001,817	87	2,479,541
Stockton	35	4,061,833	46	601,496
Vallejo-Napa-Fairfield	44	4,832,667	74	2,100,862
Yuba City	44	4,951,805	85	2,495,500
<u>Nevada</u>				
Reno	39	4,647,230	170	6,904,809

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA is within 50 air miles of one BLM WSA recommended for wilderness designation. The Hoover Wilderness, 25 miles to the west, is the nearest designated wilderness area. This wilderness area is administered by the Toiyabe and the Inyo National Forests. Other nearby designated wilderness areas include Yosemite National Park which is managed by the National Park Service, the Ansel Adams Wilderness is managed by the Inyo National Forest, and the Carson-Iceberg Wilderness which is managed by the Toiyabe National Forest.

C. Manageability

Although the area is manageable as wilderness, some limitations and severe encumbrances may exist. Manageability limitations consist of needed motorized access on two cherrystemmed roads (to Paramount Mine and to private land) by miners and livestock operators. An additional limitation would be the problems inherent with management of an irregularly shaped unit. The penetrating linear blocks of private land as well as the cherrystemmed roads inhibit complete and effective management as wilderness.

Finally, the WSA may be altogether unmanageable as wilderness if mining claims in areas of moderate to high metallic mineral potential (most of the WSA including the Paramount Mine area) result in determination of valid existing rights. The probability that this will occur is moderate to high. There is a dense staking of metallic mineral claims in the northern two-thirds of the WSA. The entire WSA contains approximately 356 mining claims. Wilderness values of naturalness, solitude, and opportunities for primitive recreation experiences could be permanently impaired in these areas if the claims are found to have valid existing rights and are developed.

Some signing, patrolling, and fencing of the WSA would be required to maintain the area's natural integrity. Purchase of the penetrating blocks of private land would enhance manageability.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of information known at the time of the preliminary suitability recommendation: The Bodie WSA is within the BLM Bodie Geology - Energy - Minerals (G-E-M) Resource Area (GRA). The G-E-M data, as supplemented by the Analysis of the Management Situation (WSA File #CA-010-100 1984), is discussed in the Affected Environment section of the wilderness recommendations-Benton Owens Valley/Bodie-Coleville Study Areas Wilderness EIS, 1987. The EIS states that the WSA has a potential for occurrence of gold, silver, mercury, and geothermal resources. The EIS states that there is low potential for non-metallics and no potential for oil and gas. There is low potential for uranium and thorium.

The supplemented G-E-M data indicated that the northern two-thirds of the WSA has a moderate potential for metallic minerals. Within this area of moderate potential is a small area of high potential around the Paramount Mine. The WSA's extreme southern edge also has a high potential for metallics.

The Paramount Mine area is rated as having a high potential for occurrence of gold, silver and mercury. This was originally the site of a mercury mine which was active between the 1940s and 1960s. No production records were found. Geologic mapping, trenching, tunneling and bulk sampling of this property have been occurring continuously over the last 15 to 20 years. More recently, Homestake Mining Company and MolyCorp did extensive exploration drilling in this area which has shown favorable gold and silver values.

The majority of the WSA has moderate potential for occurrence of gold, silver and mercury. This rating is based on the existence of the Paramount Mine, the Bluebird prospect and numerous other prospects in a large area of hydrothermally-altered volcanic rocks. These areas of hydrothermal silicification and clay alteration have been shown to be a favorable environment for precious metal deposition.

The southern area of high metallic potential is within the historic Bodie Mining District. This famous mining district was active from 1859 through the 1920s and is credited with the production of approximately 1.5 million ounces of gold and more than 15 million ounces of silver. The faulted and altered volcanic host rock of Bodie "Bonanza Zone" extends a short distance into the WSA.

As of spring 1986, 485 unpatented mining claims were located within the WSA.

The entire WSA has a moderate potential for the occurrence of geothermal resources. This rating is based on: the presence of hot springs and wells in the vicinity of the WSA; large areas showing evidence of hydrothermal alteration; extinct hot spring deposits; and the presence of relatively young volcanics in a highly faulted environment.

2. Summary of significant new mineral data collected since the suitability recommendation which should be considered in the final recommendation: No U.S. Bureau of Mines (BOM) or U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) mineral surveys were conducted in this WSA.

Homestake Mining Company submitted additional information on the Paramount Mine, Bodie, Rough Creek, Atastra Creek, Dry Lakes, Hilton Springs and Bald Peak prospects. This information was received by BLM in May of 1988.

Homestake's report recaps the production history and geology of the Bodie District. Between 1935 and 1976 several companies explored and analyzed the Bodie system. Twenty-one exploration holes were drilled during this time. Homestake began their exploration activities in 1976. Since then, extensive mapping, sampling, and metallurgy has been done as well as the drilling of 63 additional exploration holes. Using a 0.02 ounce/ton gold cut-off grade, Homestake feels that they have identified a possible 24 million tons of ore at 0.069 ounce/ton gold and 0.42 ounce/ton silver. This additional data does not change the G-E-M classification of high potential or the location of the potential area. However, it does add support to the conclusions reached in G-E-M.

To date, there have been 107 exploration holes drilled in the Paramount area totalling 14,088 feet. Using a cut-off grade of 0.02 ounces/ton gold, Homestake has identified a possible 9.3 million tons at 0.03 ounces/ton gold and 0.06 ounces/ton silver. An additional five to seven million tons of ore grade rock may be present in a 3,400-foot-long, 1,500-foot-wide zone southwest of the Paramount Mine. More drilling is required to prove this zone. This additional data adds support to the G-E-M classification of high potential in this area and enlarges the area of high potential.

No additional data was submitted which would change the moderate potential classification for metallics in the Rough Creek, Atastra Creek, Dry Lakes, Bald Peak and Hilton Springs areas.

The accompanying map reflects the current assessment of mineral occurrence potential based on current information about the area.

A review of BLM records in May of 1988 show that one geothermal lease application for 320 acres remains in the northeastern corner of the WSA. As of May 1988, BLM records indicate the following unpatented mining claims in the WSA:

Table 4 - Mining Claims

TYPE	NO.			ACRES		
	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL
Mining Claims						
Lode	0	353	353	0	7,060	7,060
Placer	0	1	1	0	40	40
Mill Sites	0	2	2	0	10	10
Total	0	356	356	0	7,110	7,110

E. Impacts on Resources

The following table summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for all alternatives considered including designation or non-designation of the entire area as wilderness. (For a full explanation of this summary, refer to the Benton-Owens Valley/Bodie-Coleville Wilderness - Final Environmental Impact Statement.)

Table 5 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	PARTIAL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Wilderness Values*	The primary impacts to wilderness values would originate from projected mineral development activities expected to occur in the Paramount Mine area and in portions of the WSA's west quarter. An open-pit mine and projected geothermal exploration would disturb 436 acres of surface and directly impair naturalness, solitude, primitive and unconfined recreation and special features, particularly crucial fawning habitat, of the WSA.	The net effect of the management actions under the All Wilderness Alternative would be a slight to, perhaps, minor enhancement of the long-term protection to wilderness values. Closure of the WSA to motorized recreation use, prohibition of geothermal exploration, and a decrease in vehicle use associated with fuelwood cutting and pinyon nut collection, would provide minor benefits to wilderness values. Foregone geothermal exploration and any unforeseen development would provide the greatest benefits to wilderness. The high probability of valid existing	Designation of the 6,945 acres as wilderness would primarily result in low positive benefits to the area's wilderness values particularly to naturalness and solitude due to the elimination of 450 annual visitor use days related to motor vehicle access, a slight reduction of vehicle use related to grazing operations and maintenance, and the prohibition of fuelwood cutting on 180 acres of accessible pinyon-juniper woodland. On the 9,942 acres not designated as wilderness there would be high adverse

Table 5 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative (Cont'd)

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	PARTIAL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Wilderness Values (continued)		rights determination for mining claims in the Paramount Mine area would lead to the development of an open-pit gold mine. As a result, wilderness values of naturalness, solitude, primitive and unconfined types of recreation, and special features would be adversely impacted in the Paramount Mine area.	impacts to wilderness values from projected development of a 420-acre open-pit gold mine near the Paramount Mine area. In addition, there would be some temporary impacts to wilderness values from projected geothermal exploration on 16 acres of public lands in the WSA's western quarter. Very slight adverse impacts to wilderness values would occur from continued motor vehicle use related to recreation, fuelwood cutting, and pinyon nut collection.
Motorized Recreation Use	There would be no impacts on motorized recreation use in the WSA. Use will continue as prescribed in the Bodie-Coleville MFP and is projected to remain stable at the current 1,000 visitor-days.	Wilderness designation would close the entire 16,814-acre WSA and eliminate 1,000 visitor-days. Due to the relatively large number of displaced users including the Modesto Ridgerunner's 4-WD poker rally this would result in a moderate impact on motorized recreation use.	Impacts on motorized recreation use in the wilderness portion of the WSA would only be minor due to opportunities outside the WSA as well as increased use of the non-wilderness portion of the WSA. While 450 visitor days would be eliminated from the designated area, an increase in the non-designated portion from the current 550 visitor-days to a projected 750 visitor-days would limit overall impacts to motorized recreation use.

*Additional data received since the FEIS was printed in 1987 may affect the degree of impact to wilderness values. Refer to minerals resource section of this document.

Table 5 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative (Cont.)

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	PARTIAL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Geothermal Resource Development	There would be no impacts on geothermal resource development. The entire WSA would be available for geothermal development however only exploration activities are anticipated.	There would only be negligible impacts to geothermal resource development. Exploration in the western quarter of the WSA would be foregone. However, no development is projected within the WSA due to only a moderate potential for geothermal resources with a low development potential.	There would be only a very minimal impact on geothermal resource development as a result of wilderness designation of 6,915 acres. Within the non-wilderness portion of the WSA there would be no impacts on geothermal resource development. Projected exploration activities could occur.
Cultural Resources	Surface-disturbing activities associated with geothermal exploration would likely only result in minor impacts to cultural resources in areas predicted very highly sensitive. Surface inventories to develop mitigation measures to minimize impacts would be required.	There would be low positive benefits to cultural resources due to precluding geothermal exploration and continued motorized recreation use.	In the 9,899 acres of the WSA not designated wilderness, surface-disturbing activities associated with geothermal exploration would likely only result in minor impacts to cultural resources. Surface inventories would be required to develop mitigation measures to minimize impacts. There would be a low positive benefit to cultural resources within the 6,915 acres designated wilderness.
Crucial Deer and Pronghorn Antelope Fawning Habitat	Mineral development in the Paramount Mine area would result in the direct loss of 420 acres and a long-term loss of productivity representing 17% of the available fawning habitat. Geothermal development would result in only minor short-term impacts to crucial fawning habitat.	Wilderness designation would result in minor positive benefits to crucial fawning habitat due to the elimination of 1,000 visitor-days and preclusion of geothermal exploration. However, projected open-pit mining would occur whether the area is designated wilderness or not. Mineral development in the Paramount Mine area would result in direct loss of 420 acres of fawning habitat and a long-term loss of productivity representing 17% of available fawning habitat.	There would be only a minor positive benefit to crucial fawning habitat within the 6,915 acres designated wilderness. Mining activity within the non-designated portion of the WSA would result in a direct loss of 420 acres of habitat and a long-term loss of productivity on 1,500 acres representing 17% of the available fawning habitat in the WSA. Geothermal development would only result in minor short-term impacts to crucial fawning habitat.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

During the inventory phase, numerous comments were received which addressed the unit's resource values, including potential rockhounding values and mineral and geothermal resource values. The need for utility line expansion was also expressed. One comment noted private inholdings as affecting wilderness values. And finally, a few individuals supported wilderness designation, noting special features in the area.

After the inventory, several comments were received during the wilderness study process. A few comments noted a favorable geologic environment for mineral deposits and one identified high geothermal resource potential in the area. One comment indicated that private inholdings and access routes negate wilderness values and another expressed the need for a 2,000-foot expansion of the existing transmission-line corridor in Bodie Creek.

During the study phase, a public meeting and public hearing were held in association with the draft environmental impact statement for the WSAs within the EIS area. The public meeting was held in Markleeville, California and the public hearing in Bishop, California. Comments were received both orally through the hearing and in writing during the 90-day public review period. A total of 81 written and oral comments were received. Thirty-two comments supported the Bureau's no-wilderness recommendation, forty-two comments supported the all-wilderness alternative, and seven comments supported the partial-wilderness alternative.

No Federal or State agency comments were received specific to this WSA.

Mono County provided a comment during the inventory which expressed the need for multiple use of the area.

Masonic Mountain

CA-010-102

MASONIC MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CA-010-102)

1. THE STUDY AREA —

6,605 acres

The Masonic Mountain WSA is located in northeastern Mono County, approximately three miles east of Bridgeport, California. The WSA includes 6,493 acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands, 112 acres of private inholdings, and no State lands (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The northern boundary of the WSA commences at the edge of a material site right-of-way and goes east along a primitive vehicle route and Toiyabe National Forest (USFS) land until it reaches an improved ranching road just south of Masonic Mountain. The boundary turns south along the road and skirts around private land. The boundary then heads west on Rock Springs Canyon Road at Locomotive Point. The southern boundary continues west along Rock Springs Canyon Road and private land until it reaches a sanitary landfill where it turns north along State Highway 182. The boundary proceeds north along the highway around private land and a 60-KV transmission line right-of-way until it returns to the material site right-of-way.

The WSA occupies the northwestern portion of the Bodie Hills. The Bodie Hills lie along the western margin of the Basin and Range geomorphic province, adjacent to and slightly within, the eastern periphery of the Sierra Nevada geomorphic province. The unit is characterized by gentle to moderately rolling volcanic hills that slope toward Bridgeport Valley which lies to the south and west. Elevation ranges from 6,000 to 9,000 feet. Some interior drainages and canyons, most notably Rock Springs Canyon, dissect the unit and diversify the area's landforms. Rock outcrops in this canyon provide picturesque and striking contrasts within the immediate area. The WSA is uniformly blanketed with pinyon-juniper associations except for the eastern and southwestern portions. Understory species include Great Basin desert shrubs such as sagebrush and annual grasses.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Various suitability recommendations were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) for the Benton-Owens Valley/Bodie-Coleville Wilderness Study Areas. A summary of the area's wilderness values was included in the Final EIS. Two different suitability recommendations were analyzed in the EIS: all wilderness and no wilderness.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE —

0	acres recommended for wilderness
6,493	BLM acres recommended for non-wilderness

No wilderness is the recommendation for this WSA. The entire acreage in this WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. The all-wilderness alternative is considered to be the environmentally-preferred alternative as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The no-wilderness alternative will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The WSA is recommended non-suitable because its potential for mineral occurrence, motorized recreation, and Native American Tribal Colony expansion needs outweigh the area's wilderness values. Within this WSA, wilderness values are considered low in quality due to the lack of significant wilderness features or characteristics unique to the region.

Resource conflicts in the WSA include moderate potential for metallic minerals in the WSA's northeastern portion, moderate potential for nonmetallic minerals in the western third of the WSA, and moderate to high potential for geothermal resources throughout the WSA. Geothermal lease applications are pending in the southwestern portion of the WSA.

The WSA sustains and provides some suitable opportunities for motorized recreational use. Approximately four miles of primitive vehicle routes are located in the WSA. These routes are used by local snowmobilers during winter months. Additionally, the Modesto Ridgerunners use these routes for their annual four-wheel drive poker rally sightseeing activity. It is expected that demand and use of this area for motorized recreational activities will continue.

The Bridgeport Indian Tribal Colony has expressed an interest and need for 120 acres of public land in the southwestern corner of the WSA. They have requested the land for long-term expansion needs related to residential and commercial development.

The WSA reflects an environment that contains wilderness values which are not considered significant or unique to the area. As a result, wilderness values are considered low and would provide little or no significant enhancement to the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS).

TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	6,493
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		112
Total		<u>6,605</u>
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Study Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<u>0</u>
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	6,493
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>6,493</u>

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The WSA is considered to be very natural. It consists of rolling and rounded volcanic hills dissected by interior drainages. Rock Springs Canyon incises the southern portion of the unit up to a depth of 700 feet. Rocky outcrops in this canyon impart striking and sharp contrasts in the local area - particularly around Locomotive Point. A pinyon-juniper woodland with a big sagebrush, bitterbrush, and perennial grass understory covers most of the WSA. Treeless areas are dominated by big sagebrush and perennial grasses. Plant density is moderate.

There are a few man-made imprints which are substantially unnoticeable in the WSA as a whole. These include approximately four miles of primitive Jeep trails, a fenceline, and two spring developments. Excessive livestock utilization in some wetland

areas is causing site degradation. Man-made features are small relation to the unit's overall size, terrain, diversity, and vegetative screening.

2. Solitude: The unit provides outstanding opportunities for solitude and isolation. Topographic diversity and vegetative screening provided by the pinyon-juniper stands combine together to screen out man's influences, thus enhancing opportunities for seclusion. The Bridgeport community and State Highway 182 are located along the western side of the unit and slightly limit opportunities for solitude along the western edge of the WSA.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and unconfined recreation: The eastern portion of the WSA contains outstanding opportunities for sage grouse hunting--a very popular area during open season. In addition, the area provides outstanding opportunities for other primitive recreation experiences such as camping, hiking, horseback riding, etc. A few water sources are located in the WSA.
4. Special features: The WSA contains a few special features. The WSA supports two plant species that are candidates for the sensitive plant list (Phacelia monoensis and Eriogonum ampullaceum).

In addition, the WSA includes several wildlife species such as sage grouse, a recovering species of game birds that had been historically over-harvested, and mule deer which rely on this intact natural environment for their seasonal migrations. The WSA's understory, pinyon cover and rock outcrops also provide crucial fawning habitat for deer.

B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS)

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 6,493 acres of the Intermountain Sagebrush/Juniper Woodland ecosystem. The Masonic Mountain WSA would not increase the diversity of the types of ecosystems represented in the NWPS.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush/ Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	4	81,301	74	2,144,810
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
Intermountain Sagebrush/ Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	3	61,701	18	359,340

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of nine major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3 - Wilderness Opportunities for Residents of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>California</u>				
Chico	16	1,286,873	13	430,822
Fresno	35	4,048,852	28	460,790
Merced	33	3,957,550	25	348,753
Modesto	36	4,126,963	81	1,722,326
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Vallejo-Napa-Fairfield	44	4,832,667	74	2,100,862
Yuba City	44	4,951,805	85	2,459,500
<u>Nevada</u>				
Reno	39	4,647,230	175	6,904,809

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA is within 50 air miles of one BLM WSA recommended for wilderness designation. The Hoover Wilderness, 15 miles to the west, is the nearest designated wilderness area. This wilderness area is administered by the Toiyabe and the Inyo National Forests. Other nearby designated wilderness areas include Yosemite National Park which is managed by the National Park Service, the Ansel Adams

Wilderness which is managed by the Inyo National Forest, and the Carson-Iceberg Wilderness which is managed by the Toiyabe National Forest.

C. Manageability

The WSA is manageable as wilderness. The low brush and gentle terrain along the northeastern corner as well as some small areas near the western boundary make these portions of the unit susceptible to indiscriminate off-highway vehicle use. Some signing, patrolling, and fencing may be required at these locations. Indiscriminate off-highway vehicle use is considered to be low.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of information known at the time of the preliminary suitability recommendation: The Masonic Mountain WSA is in the BLM Bodie Geology-Energy-Mineral (G-E-M) Resource Area (GRA). An overview of the mineral potential of the WSA is addressed in the Affected Environment section of the Wilderness Recommendations, Benton-Owens Valley/Bodie-Coleville Study Area EIS prepared in 1987. The EIS states that the WSA has a moderate resource potential for metallic minerals in the northeastern portion and a low resource potential for metallic minerals for the remainder of the area. The resource potential for non-metallics including sand and gravel is moderate in the western third and low for the remainder of the WSA. The resource potential for uranium is low. There is no resource potential for oil and gas. The geothermal resource potential is moderate for most of the WSA to high in the southwestern corner of the WSA ("Lands Prospectively Valuable for Geothermal Resources", unpublished USGS map, revised 1985).

The mineral information in the EIS is supported by the BLM Bodie G-E-M report. This report includes extensive references and personal communications with mining companies active in the area. The Masonic Mountain WSA encompassing 6,493 acres of public land is located on the southern edge of the Masonic mining district. The Bodie mining district is approximately eight miles southeast of the WSA. The general area is underlain by Tertiary lava flows, plugs, and pyroclastic deposits of principally dacitic composition. Production of gold and silver in the mining districts came from several systems of quartz veins. They are closely associated with hydrothermal alterations widespread in the mining districts. This hydrothermal alteration is common in the WSA. BLM records in 1983 identified 21 mining claims in the WSA and a few pending geothermal lease applications in the southwest corner of WSA.

2. Summary of significant new mineral resource data collected since the suitability recommendation which should be considered in the final recommendation: Because this WSA was recommended nonsuitable by BLM, no U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) nor U.S. Bureau of Mines (BOM) mineral surveys were conducted in this WSA. No new mineral data in the WSA has become available since the preparation of G-E-M report in 1983.

Re-examination of the BOM's Mineral Industry Location System (MILS) record (March 25, 1983) disclosed a mercury occurrence at NW1/4, NW1/4, section 22, T. 5 N., R. 25 E. within the WSA. This is the only mineral information in addition to the past mineral record described in the EIS. This mercury occurrence is not significant enough to alter the earlier EIS conclusions.

As of March, 1988, BLM records indicated that there are nine lode claims covering 180 acres in the nonsuitable portion of the WSA (Table 4). The areas of high and moderate geothermal potential cover 6,493 acres or 100% of the WSA.

Table 4 - Mining Claims

TYPE	NO.			ACRES		
	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL
Mining Claims						
Lode	0	9	9	0	180	180
Placer	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mill Sites	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	9	9	0	180	180

E. Impacts on Resources

The following table summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for all alternatives considered including designation or non-designation of the entire area as wilderness. (For a full explanation of this summary, refer to the Benton-Owens Valley/Bodie-Coleville Wilderness - Final Environmental Impact Statement.)

Table 5 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Wilderness Values	<p>On an overall basis there would be a minor impact to wilderness values throughout the 6,605-acre Masonic Mountains WSA. Localized impacts near the northwest and southwest boundaries from mining activity and geothermal development would result in a direct loss of naturalness on 180 acres and impair the perception of naturalness and solitude on a total of 1,000 acres. Future residential and commercial development for the Bridgeport Indian Colony on 120 acres of public land within the WSA would result in a direct loss of naturalness and adversely impact the perception of naturalness and solitude throughout the southwest portion. Continued motorized recreation use, fuelwood harvesting, pinyon nut collecting, and construction and maintenance of livestock facilities and wildlife projects would result in only negligible to minor local impacts. Opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation would be limited primarily along the boundary of the WSA in areas of mining</p>	<p>Wilderness designation of the entire 6,605 acres within the Masonic Mountain WSA would result in positive benefits to the wilderness values. Naturalness and solitude would be significantly retained locally by prohibiting mining activities that would affect 300 acres and geothermal development affecting 700 acres. Potential expansion of the Bridgeport Indian Colony within the WSA would be precluded retaining wilderness values within the surrounding 700 acres. Opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation would be retained throughout the WSA. Closure of the WSA to motorized recreation would result in a slight positive benefit to wilderness values. Special features including sensitive plants and crucial deer fawning habitat would be retained and slightly enhanced.</p>

Table 5 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative (Cont'd)

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Wilderness Values (continued)	activity, geothermal development, expansion of the Bridgeport Indian Colony, and continued vehicle use. Special features including sensitive plants and crucial deer fawning habitat would be retained.	
Motorized Recreation Use	There would be no impact on motorized recreation use in the WSA. The current 450 visitor use days per year are expected to remain stable.	The entire WSA would be closed eliminating 450 visitor-days per year of motorized recreation use. Only minor adverse impacts are anticipated due to the availability of opportunities outside the WSA and the accessibility of the WSA by foot.
Mineral Development	There would be no impact on mineral development. An open-pit gold mine and a sand and gravel operation are anticipated for development within the WSA.	Development of potential mineral resources within the WSA would be foregone. Known deposits of sand and gravel and projected deposits of disseminated gold would not be available for development.
Geothermal Development	There would be no impact on geothermal resource development. The entire WSA would be available for exploration and development including a projected 10-Mw low temperature resource.	Geothermal resource development would be prohibited. Development of a potential 10-Mw low temperature geothermal resource would be foregone. Over the long term, this would result in only a minor impact.
Potential Indian Colony Expansion	There would be no impact on potential expansion of the Bridgeport Indian Colony to meet their future needs.	Since public lands would not be available for potential expansion needs of the Bridgeport Indian Colony, there could be an adverse impact.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

During the inventory phase, a few comments were received addressing the WSA's geothermal potential, and existence of non-public lands.

After the inventory, comments were received during the wilderness study process. One comment was received which supported the area's supplemental values, and thus supported wilderness designations. Eight comments were received which noted the area's mineral specimens and requested the area remain open to rockhounding.

During the study phase, a public meeting and public hearing were held in association with the draft EIS. The public meeting was held in Markleeville, California, and the public hearing in Bishop, California. Comments were received orally through the hearing, and in writing during the 90-day public review period. A total of 83 written and oral comments were received. Forty-one comments supported the Bureau's no-wilderness recommendation. Forty-two comments supported the all-wilderness alternative.

No Federal, State or County agency comments were received specific to this WSA.

Slinkard

CA-010-105

SLINKARD WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CA-010-105/NV-030-531)

1. THE STUDY AREA --- 6,268 acres

The Slinkard WSA is located in northern Mono County and northeastern Alpine County approximately seven miles north and west of Topaz, California. The WSA includes 6,268 acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land; 422 of these acres are split estate lands (surface managed by the Bureau, subsurface owned by non-Bureau entity). There are neither State lands nor private inholdings within the WSA (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The northern boundary of the WSA follows the Toiyabe National Forest boundary east until it intersects State Highway 89. The boundary follows the meandering highway to the vehicle route that enters the northern end of Slinkard Valley. The boundary proceeds south along the vehicle route and veers west and south in an irregular pattern around private land. The boundary turns and proceeds west for one mile along the northeastern tip of the Carson-Iceberg Wilderness. The boundary turns north and follows private land, contour features including canyons, and on the Mono/Alpine County line until it reaches the Toiyabe National Forest boundary three-quarters of a mile south of Monitor Pass.

The WSA lies at the extreme eastern edge of the Sierra Nevada geomorphic province. The WSA consists of a north-south trending mountain range which is dissected by numerous drainages and canyons. The eastern slope is rugged and steep while the western slope is more gentle and moderate. Elevation ranges from 6,800 feet to 8,938 feet. A tributary of Slinkard Creek is located in the northern end of the unit. Vegetation in the unit consists of Great Basin shrubs and perennial grasses. Dense stands of pinyon-juniper, white fir, quaking aspen, and Jeffrey pine occupy the unit.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Various suitability recommendations were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) for the Benton-Owens Valley/Bodie-Coleville Wilderness Study Areas. A summary of the area's wilderness values was included in the Final EIS. Two different suitability recommendations were analyzed in the EIS: all wilderness and no wilderness.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE ---

0	acres recommended for wilderness
6,268	BLM acres recommended for non-wilderness

No wilderness is the recommendation for this WSA. The entire acreage in this WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. The all-wilderness alternative is considered to be the environmentally-preferred alternative

as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The no-wilderness alternative will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The WSA is recommended non-suitable due to overriding manageability considerations. In addition, the potential for mineral exploration and development outweighs the area's wilderness values.

A primary manageability concern which led to the nonsuitable recommendation is the unit's long, narrow (only one to two miles wide), irregular shape which limits effective management. Its ridge-like character renders it highly vulnerable to adjacent outside sights as well as to potential encroachment of incompatible uses. Based on discussion with the Toiyabe National Forest, it does not enhance manageability of the adjacent Carson-Iceberg Wilderness. It extends from the northeast edge of the Carson-Iceberg Wilderness as a narrow finger of public land that would be more difficult to manage than the existing wilderness.

Secondarily, minor resource conflicts in the WSA include moderate uranium and geothermal potential throughout the WSA. A small number of mining claims are located in the northwestern portion of the WSA. There is a low probability that mining claims in the WSA would result in valid existing rights.

There are approximately three miles of primitive ways which will remain available for vehicular use.

TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	5,846
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	422
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
Total		6,268
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Study Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	5,846
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	422
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		6,268

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The overall area is very natural. The unit occupies a portion of a narrow linear mountain range bounded by Slinkard and Bagley Valleys to the east and west, respectively. The western slope contains dramatic rugged mountain features while the gentler eastern slope reflects more subdued soft physical features. The unit is dissected by numerous tree-lined canyons. A tributary of Slinkard Creek occupies the northern portion of the unit. The low elevation slopes are covered by big sagebrush, bitterbrush, and perennial grasses. Higher elevation slopes support a pinyon-juniper woodland with associated mountain mahogany. The steep-sloped drainages have stands of white fir, Jeffrey pine, and aspen.

A few primitive vehicle routes totaling approximately three miles exist. A creek is undergoing some localized site degradation due to past livestock use. Lack of access to the WSA has insured its natural integrity.

2. Solitude: The WSA has limited opportunities for solitude. Although the rugged topography and vegetative screening provide isolation, opportunities for solitude are limited by the unit's vulnerability to adjacent or outside activities. The unit's ridge-like character and its very narrow linear shape make it susceptible to outside sights. State Highway 89 borders the northeastern boundary of the WSA, while adjacent private lands and associated activities such as vehicle use are easily seen from the main ridge and the lateral flanks of the unit.

This WSA may be overflowed in the future by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission during approved military operations. The visual intrusions and associated noise create temporary effects on solitude which are deemed acceptable and necessary as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and unconfined recreation: The unit contains opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation experiences. These opportunities include hunting, backpacking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, camping, horseback riding, etc. The rugged and diverse terrain facilitates opportunities for different types of recreation experiences.
4. Special features: The primary special features in the WSA consist of wildlife values, old growth forest and riparian values. The unit is considered crucial deer fawning habitat because mule deer rely on lower elevation habitat for forage requirements during the harsh Sierra high-country winters.

B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS)

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 6,268 acres of the Sierran Forest/Juniper-Pinyon Woodland ecosystem. Although this WSA would add diversity in the types of ecosystems represented in the NWPS the Bureau has recommended two WSAs with similar ecosystems (Owen's Peak WSA and Sacatar Meadows WSA) as suitable for wilderness designation. The Slinkard WSA would not increase the diversity of the types of ecosystems represented in the NWPS.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
Sierran Forest/ Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	0	0	5	49,154
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
Sierran Forest/ Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	0	0	5	49,154

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of 13 major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3 - Wilderness Opportunities for Residents of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>California</u>				
Chico	16	1,286,873	13	430,822
Fresno	35	4,048,852	28	460,790
Merced	33	3,957,550	25	348,753
Modesto	36	4,126,963	81	1,722,326
Sacramento	46	5,001,817	87	2,479,541
San Francisco/Oakland	39	4,473,002	39	565,614
San Jose	27	3,765,512	29	352,748
Santa Cruz	27	3,765,512	32	407,890
Santa Rosa/Petaluma	10	888,579	12	134,167
Stockton	35	4,061,833	46	601,496
Vallejo-Napa-Fairfield	44	4,832,667	74	2,100,862
Yuba City	44	4,951,805	85	2,459,500
<u>Nevada</u>				
Reno	39	4,647,230	175	6,904,809

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The WSA is within 50 air miles of one BLM WSA recommended for wilderness designation. The Carson-Iceberg Wilderness adjoins the one-mile wide southern WSA boundary. This wilderness is administered by the Toiyabe National Forest. Other nearby designated wilderness areas include the Mokelumne Wilderness which is managed by the Stanislaus and Toiyabe National Forests, the Emigrant Wilderness which is managed by the Stanislaus National Forest, and the Hoover Wilderness which is managed by the Inyo and Toiyabe National Forests.

C. Manageability

The WSA is manageable as wilderness but with severe limitations due to its very narrow, linear shape. Its ridge-like character renders it highly vulnerable to adjacent or outside sights. The unit's narrow and protruding character does not enhance manageability of the adjoining Carson-Iceberg Wilderness according to Toiyabe National Forest, nor does the adjoining wilderness enhance manageability of this unit. Any unforeseen developments on these adjoining private lands would severely limit manageability.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of information known at the time of the preliminary suitability recommendation: The Slinkard WSA is described in the Slinkard Geology-Energy-Minerals (G-E-M) Technical Report prepared in 1983 by Great Basin G-E-M Joint Venture. The mineral resources description in the Affected Environment of the section of the 1987 BLM Wilderness Recommendations, Benton-Owens Valley/Bodie-Coleville Study Areas, Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was taken primarily from the G-E-M report mentioned above. The EIS states that the WSA has a low potential for the occurrence of minerals with the exception of uranium, which has moderate potential. The EIS indicates a moderate potential for the occurrence of geothermal resources according to the BLM classification scheme.

The predominant rock types encompassing most of the WSA are andesite and rhyolite, a thick sequence of which was extruded during the late Tertiary and early Quaternary. During the Miocene andesite breccias, mudflows and interbedded tuffs were deposited upon the granitic intrusives of the Sierra Nevada Batholith. These granites are of Jurassic age and, according to the G-E-M report, are interspersed with remnants of metasediments and metavolcanics. Abundant evidence of recent faulting, recent volcanic activity and the presence of hot springs near the WSA in Antelope Valley support the determination of moderate potential for the occurrence of geothermal resources. The moderate potential for

uranium is based on two types of environments known to be favorable for its occurrence. The primary environment for uranium in the WSA is the rhyolite. This rock is known to be a common source rock for uranium. The second favorable environment for uranium occurrence is in localized pegmatites and alaskites intrusions which invade more mafic granites.

There are three mining districts within ten miles of the WSA. The Silver Mountain Gold-Silver District is ten miles west of the WSA. The Monitor-Moyul Gold-Silver District is five miles northwest of the WSA. The Silver King Area contains two small gold-silver prospects, and is three miles south of the WSA.

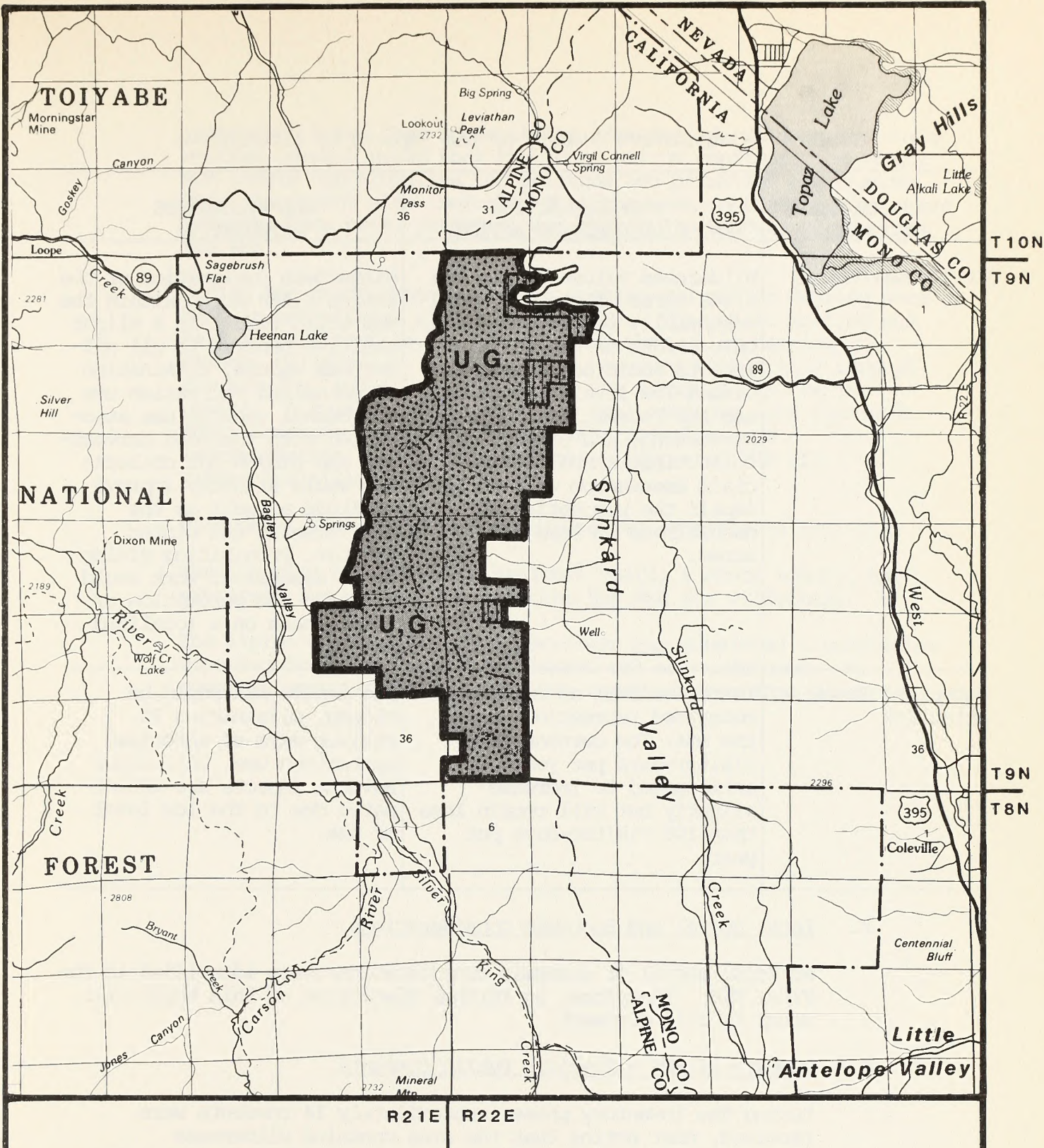
Five miles southeast of the WSA are the Al Mono and Golden Gate properties which produced minor amounts of gold from quartz veins in an area of extensive hydrothermal alteration. Sulfur was produced from the Leviathan mine from volcanic tuffs five miles north of the WSA. The Geranium claims in T. 9 N, R. 20 E., section 32 were reported to produce minor amounts of uranium, molybdenum, lead and zinc from carbonaceous sandstone. Limestone in metamorphic roof pendants has been produced ten miles west of the WSA.

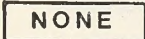



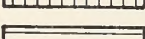
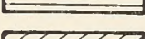
Although no mineral production has ever been recorded within the WSA, mineral interest has been indicated by the presence of eighteen unpatented mining claims located in T. 9 N., R. 21 E., sections 12 and 13.

2. Summary of significant new mineral resource data collected since the suitability recommendation which should be considered in the final recommendation: No U.S. Geologic Survey (USGS) or U.S. Bureau of Mines (BOM) mineral surveys were conducted in this WSA. No additional information regarding the mineral potential for the WSA has been received since publication of the original EIS in 1987. As of March 25, 1988, the Mining Claim Index showed 18 mining claims or mineral leases on file within the WSA.

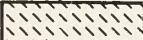

E. Impacts on Resources

The following table summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for all alternatives considered including designation or non-designation of the entire area as wilderness. (For a full explanation of this summary, refer to the Benton-Owens Valley/Bodie-Coleville Wilderness - Final Environmental Impact Statement.)



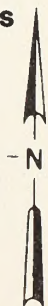
- | | | |
|--|------|---|
|  | NONE | Recommended for Wilderness |
|  | | Recommended for Non Wilderness |
|  | | Land outside WSA Recommended for Wilderness |
|  | | Split Estate |
|  | | State |
|  | | Private |

Explanation

- | | |
|---|--|
|  | High Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals |
|  | Moderate Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals |
| M | Moderate Mineral Potential Location in a High Mineral Potential Area |
| H | High Mineral Potential Location in a Moderate Mineral Potential Area |

Commodity Symbols

- | | |
|----------|------------|
| G | Geothermal |
| U | Uranium |



Slinkard
Mineral Resource Potential

0 1 2 3
MILES

Map-2
010-105

Table 4 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Wilderness Values	Wilderness values within the 6,268 acres of the WSA would essentially remain unchanged. Only slight or negligible impacts would occur from continued low levels of vehicle use for recreation, fuelwood harvesting, and pinyon nut collecting. Annual mining claim assessment work would impair the perception of naturalness on less than 5 acres.	Wilderness designation of the entire 6,268 acres within the WSA would result in a slight positive benefit to all wilderness values. Elimination of motorized recreation use and casual vehicle use associated with fuelwood harvesting and pinyon nut collecting would slightly improve solitude as well as the deer fawning and winter habitat. Prohibiting mining claim assessment work would maintain the perception of naturalness on a localized basis.
Motorized Recreation Use	There would be no impacts on motorized recreation use in the WSA. The current 70 visitor-days per year are anticipated to increase slightly but will remain less than 100 visitor-days per year.	The entire WSA would be closed, eliminating 70 visitor-days of motorized recreation use. Only minor adverse impacts are anticipated due to the low level of use.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

During the inventory phase, approximately 14 comments were received, most noting that the area contains wilderness characteristics. A few of the comments noted roads, intrusions, or lack of outstanding opportunities. Several noted supplemental values.

After the inventory, comments were received during the wilderness study process. A few comments supported wilderness while one respondent stated the WSA should not be designated wilderness unless the adjacent RARE II area was designated wilderness. A

respondent noted that roads in the area degrade wilderness, while another comment noted that the long, narrow configuration of the WSA limits opportunities for solitude and primitive experiences. This respondent also indicated that the area contains low to moderate base metal potential and that State Highway 89 flanks the WSA.

During the study phase, a public meeting and public hearing were held in association with the draft EIS. The public meeting was held in Markleeville, California, and the public hearing in Bishop, California. Comments were received both orally through the hearing, and in writing during the 90-day public review period. A total of 83 written and oral comments were received. Forty comments supported the Bureau's no-wilderness recommendation. Forty-three comments supported the all-wilderness alternative.

No Federal agency comments were received specific to this WSA.

The Lahontan Water Quality Regional Board, a state agency, has expressed its support to designate the WSA for wilderness.

The Alpine County Board of Supervisors has submitted a resolution opposing designation of the Slinkard WSA as wilderness. No comments specific to this WSA were received from Mono County.

Machesna

CA-010-108

MACHESNA WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CA-010-108)

1. THE STUDY AREA --- 70 acres

The Machesna WSA is located in San Luis Obispo County approximately 25 miles east of San Luis Obispo. The WSA includes 70 acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The WSA is bordered by the Los Padres National Forest (USFS) on the north, Bureau of Land Management wilderness on the east, and private land on the south and west.

The WSA consists of south-facing slopes, primarily chemise chaparral with blue oak woodland, annual grassland, and an occasional Digger pine. North-facing slopes support mixed chaparral of chemise, manzanita, and ceanothus.

The WSA was studied under Section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Suitability recommendations were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) for the Central California Section 202 Wilderness Study Areas. A summary of the area's wilderness values was included in the Final EIS. Two different suitability recommendations were analyzed in the EIS: all wilderness and no wilderness.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE --- 0 acres recommended
for wilderness
70 BLM acres recommended for
non-wilderness

No wilderness is the recommendation for this WSA. The entire acreage in the WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. The all wilderness alternative is considered to be the environmentally preferred alternative as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The no wilderness alternative will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The WSA is recommended nonsuitable for the following reasons: the moderate potential for occurrence of oil and gas in the unit, the use of the primitive vehicle route through the unit for the annual Hi Mountain Motorcycle Enduro, the area's wilderness values are not outstanding, and the addition of this parcel as wilderness would add an irregular boundary difficult to manage.

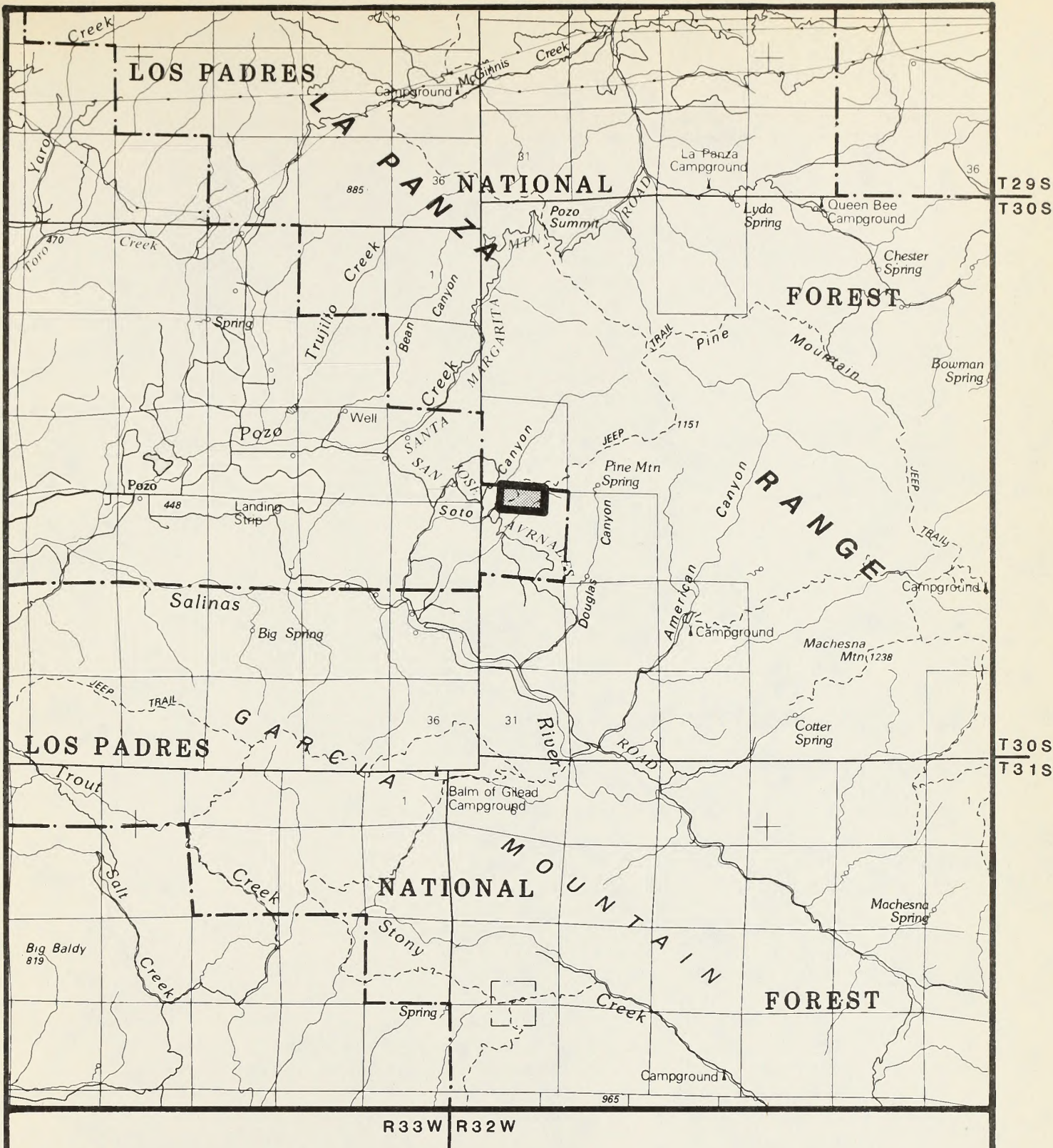
The total area of the WSA has been found to have a moderate mineral resource potential for the occurrence of oil and gas.

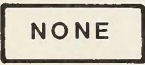


Vehicle use of the WSA is concentrated along the one existing primitive vehicle route through the area, a quarter-mile section of primitive route running along the USFS designated Machesna Wilderness and cutting through the




northwest corner of the WSA. This route has been used since 1950 and continues to be used for the one-day annual Hi Mountain Enduro - a motorcycle event sponsored by the Cal Poly Penguins Motorcycle Club. This event, which is usually held during late March, starts, finishes and has pit/camp areas within the Los Padres National Forest. The route within the WSA completes the Nick Route portion of the overall course with approximately 75 to 100 riders making one pass through the WSA. The vehicle route is closed to all recreational vehicles the remainder of the year by a locked gate on private land to the west. Wilderness designation would eliminate the Nick Route from the Hi Mountain Enduro; this would affect the availability of the only recreational vehicle route out of the Machesna Mountain area. The 1984 California Wilderness Act used the vehicle route as a boundary for the Machesna Wilderness Area, so that vehicles could continue to use this route in the forest. Use of this primitive route causes negligible short-term impacts to the area.

The wilderness values of the area are not outstanding and there are no special features within the WSA. Current management has proven effective in maintaining the area's existing resources.

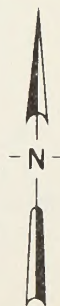
The WSA borders designated wilderness, but its projection from the boundary and its lack of topographic continuity with the adjacent Los Padres National Forest Machesna Wilderness creates management problems. The USFS has indicated that the addition of this area would not enhance their wilderness management capability.



- | | | |
|---|---|----------------------------|
|  | NONE | RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS | |
|  | LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS | |

- | | |
|---|--------------|
|  | SPLIT ESTATE |
|  | STATE |
|  | PRIVATE |

**Machesna
Proposal
MAP-1**



010-108
JUNE, 1988

TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	70
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
Total		70
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Study Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Lands Recommended for Wilderness		0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	70
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		70

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The WSA has generally retained its naturalness with the exception of a seldom used one-quarter-mile long primitive vehicle route that runs through the northwest corner of the WSA. This vehicle route is not used for general recreation traffic; access is controlled to the west by a gate on private land.

Steep terrain and thick vegetation has limited this route to a very narrow corridor; it does not impact the total area's naturalness.

2. Solitude: Topographical diversity and vegetative screening provide opportunities for solitude in the WSA, but they are limited due to the WSA's size and boundary with private land on two sides. The WSA's shape and configuration outside the topographical boundaries of the adjacent USFS Machesna Wilderness limit solitude even when

considered in conjunction with the bordering wilderness. Negligible impact to solitude could occur with the continued infrequent use of the quarter-mile primitive vehicle route.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and unconfined recreation: The WSA's size and location next to private land activities severely limit opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation. Even in conjunction with adjacent wilderness lands, a dense vegetative cover restricts movement in the area. The only vehicle route running through the WSA is a quarter-mile primitive road. It is used intermittently as part of one loop of a motorcycle enduro. The landowner to the west of the WSA keeps a gate to the vehicle route locked the rest of the year. No other vehicle use occurs in the WSA. An occasional hunter or hiker may utilize the WSA otherwise no significant recreation use exists.
4. Special features: The Machesna WSA contains no ecological, geological or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS)

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 70 acres of the California Chaparral/California Oakwoods ecosystem. Wilderness designation of the Machesna Mountain WSA would not increase the diversity of the types of ecosystems represented in the NWPS.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
California Chaparral/ California Oakwoods	4	105,301	6	39,656
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
California Chaparral/ California Oakwoods	4	105,301	6	39,656

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of 15 major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3 - Wilderness Opportunities for Residents of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	<u>NWPS areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>California</u>				
Anaheim-Santa Ana	25	2,823,534	153	5,703,515
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Fresno	35	4,048,852	28	460,790
Los Angeles-Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
Merced	33	3,957,550	25	348,753
Modesto	36	4,126,963	81	1,722,326
Oxnard-Ventura	23	2,195,198	85	2,703,260
Riverside-San Bernardino	22	2,031,054	205	7,658,649
Salinas-Seaside-Monterey	24	3,676,896	45	644,415
San Francisco-Oakland	39	4,473,002	39	565,614
San Jose	27	3,765,512	29	352,748
Santa Barbara-Santa Maria- Lompoc	20	1,166,142	35	528,590
Santa Cruz	27	3,765,512	32	407,890
Stockton	35	4,061,833	46	601,496
Visalia-Tulare-Porterville	34	4,431,635	61	1,681,921

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: There are no other BLM WSAs within 50 air miles recommended for wilderness designation. The Santa Lucia Wilderness is located approximately ten miles northwest of the WSA. The San Rafael and Dick Smith Wilderness Areas are located 35 and 40 miles, respectively, to the south of the WSA. All areas mentioned are managed by the Los Padres National Forest.

- C. Manageability: The Machesna WSA is manageable as wilderness but only with difficulty. Manageability problems include the area's small size and the lack of topographic continuity of the WSA with the adjacent USFS wilderness. Also, there are no natural boundaries to prevent encroachment of bordering private land activities. Frequent signing of the borders would be required to insure the integrity of the unit.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of information known at the time of the preliminary suitability recommendation: The geology and mineral resources of the Machesna Section 202 WSA is described in the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) 1988 Final EIS, Land and Resource Management Plan, Los Padres National Forest, AMS - Minerals addendum and shown on an unpublished geologic map by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) (i.e., Dibblee, 1971, "Geologic Map of the Pozo Quadrangle, California"; USGS, Open File Map 72-89).

The mineral resource data in the Affected Environment section of the 1988 BLM Wilderness Recommendations, California Section 202 Wilderness Study Area Final EIS is based primarily on these data sources. The BLM EIS indicates that the whole WSA has a moderate mineral resource potential for the occurrence of oil and gas. (See accompanying mineral potential map). The WSA is in the Coast Range geomorphic province and is composed primarily of Cretaceous marine sandstones, clay shales and cobble conglomerates.

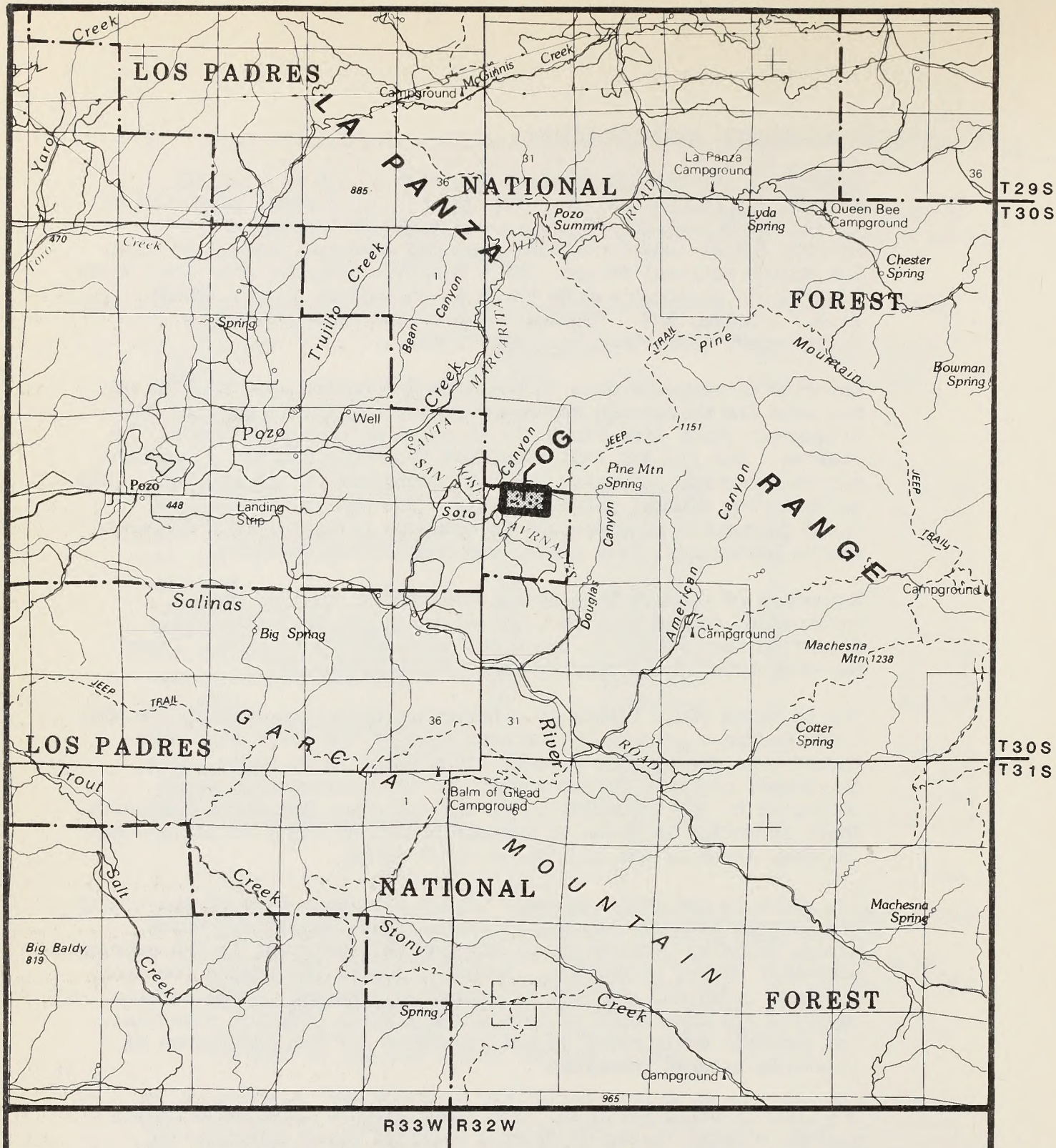
Exposures of younger Miocene-age sandstones, shales, and interbedded cobble conglomerates of the Santa Margarita Shale formation are present to the west, just outside the WSA. These non-conforming rocks overlay the Cretaceous strata.

The La Panza Fault trends in a northwest direction through the WSA. Older Cretaceous rocks on the east side of the fault have been thrust over the younger Miocene rocks on the west side. This overthrust may have formed structural or stratigraphic traps conducive to the accumulation of oil and gas. The Santa Margarita Shale formation is known to contain producing zones of oil and gas in other areas of the California Coast Range.

The rocks in the southwest half of the WSA (west side of the fault) are covered with Pleistocene sand and gravel deposits. Recent stream deposits overlay or cut through this material in the extreme northwest corner of the WSA. However, due to the remote location, distance to market and lack of expressed interest, these salable deposits are considered to have a low mineral resource potential. The geologic environment is not favorable for the occurrence of locatable mineral resources.

BLM records dated March 25, 1988 identified no unpatented mining claims, mineral leases or mineral material sales contracts or permits.

2. Summary of significant new mineral resource data collected since the suitability recommendation, which should be considered in the final recommendation: No USGS or USBM mineral surveys were conducted in this WSA. As of May 1988, no new mineral resource information concerning this WSA has been obtained.



E. Impacts on Resources

The following table summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for all alternatives considered including designation or non-designation of the entire area as wilderness. (For a full explanation of this summary, refer to the Central California Section 202 - Wilderness Final Environmental Impact Statement.)

Table 4 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impacts on Wilderness Values	Wilderness values will be negligibly impacted as a result of not designating the WSA as wilderness. Although there is no motorized recreational use in the WSA, a one-quarter-mile-long primitive vehicle route that crosses the northwest corner of the WSA would continue to be used for the Hi Mountain Enduro motorcycle event. Approximately 75 riders will disrupt solitude when the annual event occurs. Continued infrequent use of the route to replace salt licks in the adjacent USFS grazing allotment will result in negligible impacts to solitude. Potential fire suppression activities necessary to control wild-fire could lead to short-term impacts to the perception of naturalness.	There would be a slight positive benefit to wilderness values particularly naturalness and solitude as a result of precluding the Hi Mountain Enduro motorcycle event and vehicle access for the adjacent USFS grazing allotment. Long-term protection from unanticipated future actions that could result in potential adverse impacts would be provided by wilderness legislation.
Impacts on Hi Mountain Enduro	The Hi Mountain Enduro will continue to use one-quarter mile of primitive vehicle route in the WSA. Therefore, there would be no impact on the event.	Wilderness designation would preclude the use of the WSA for the Hi Mountain Enduro.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

During the wilderness inventory phase, one comment addressed the inventory unit's potential for oil and gas development.

During the study phase, a public hearing was held in Bakersfield, California and written comments were accepted until February 15, 1988. The majority of the comments received supported the all-wilderness alternative for this unit.

No Federal, State, or County agency comments were received specific to this WSA.

Merced River

CA-040-203

MERCED RIVER WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CA-040-203)

1. THE STUDY AREA --- 13,140 acres

The Merced River WSA is located in central Merced County. It is located in the Merced River Canyon between Bagby and Briceburg, approximately eight miles north of the town of Mariposa, California. The WSA includes 12,959 acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands and 181 of private inholdings totaling 13,140 acres (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The WSA is bounded to the west and south by private land and electrical power transmission lines, on the east by the old Yosemite railroad grade, private land, a fire break along the ridge top, and down an unnamed drainage to the north fork of the Merced River, and on the north by the north fork of the Merced River to the Schilling Ranch Road river crossing, along the Schilling Ranch Road and private property boundaries.

The WSA is within the Merced River Canyon and includes portions of the north fork of the Merced River, and numerous other small canyons. Elevations vary from approximately 850 to 3,400 feet above sea level. The vegetation of the unit is primarily chemise with some pines and oak occurring along the major drainages. Manzanita, other low shrubs and annuals also occur at varying densities throughout the unit. There are two special designations within the area. One is the Limestone Salamander Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), and the other is a Congressionally mandated study of the area to include the Merced River in the Wild and Scenic River System.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Suitability recommendations were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) for the Central California Study Areas. A summary of the area's wilderness values was included in the Final EIS. Two different suitability recommendations were analyzed in the EIS; all wilderness and no wilderness.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE --- 0 acres recommended for wilderness
12,959 BLM acres recommended for non wilderness

No wilderness is the recommendation for this WSA. The entire acreage in the WSA is released for uses other than wilderness.

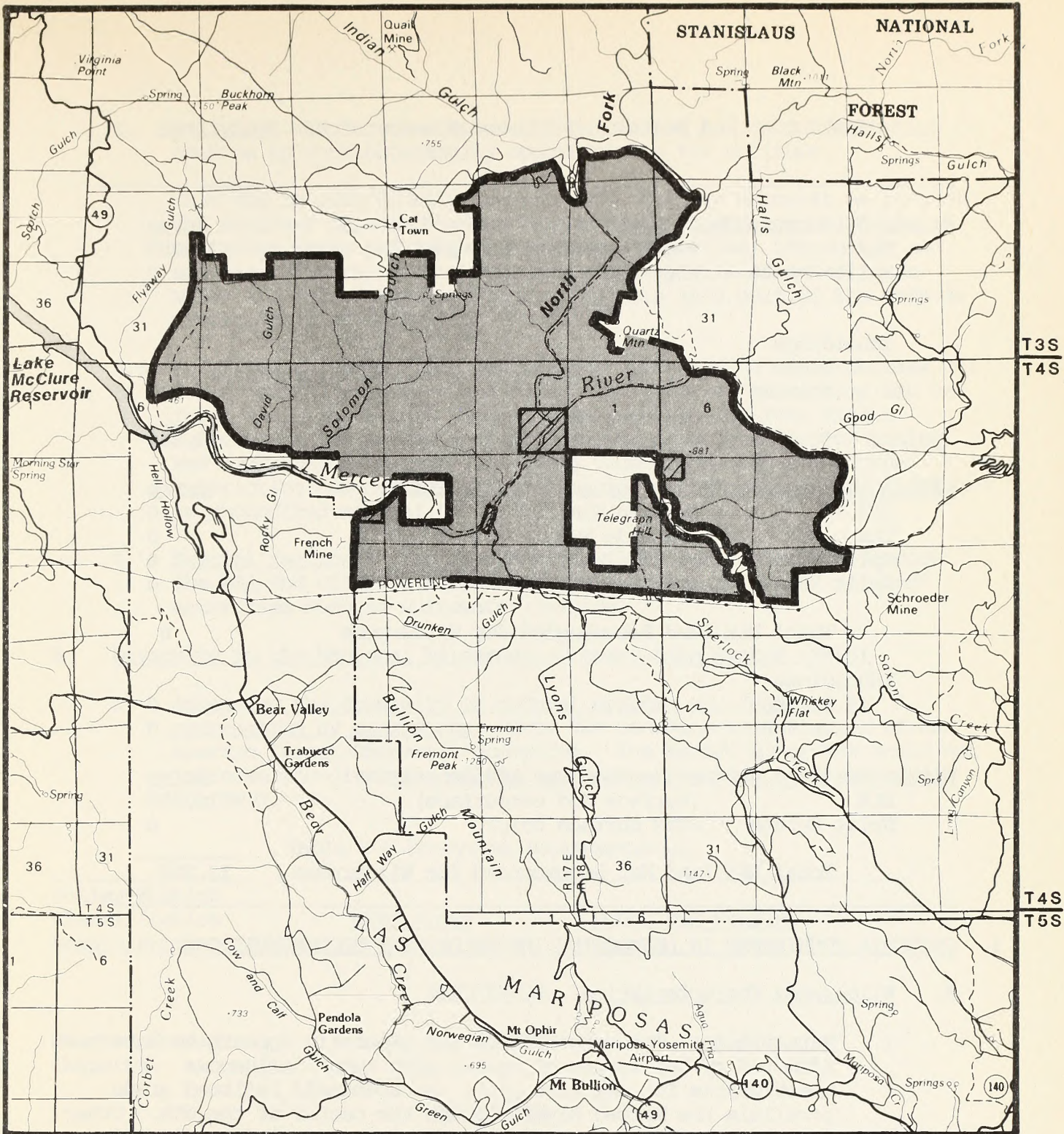
The all-wilderness alternative is considered to be the environmentally preferred alternative as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The no-wilderness alternative will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The WSA is recommended nonsuitable for the following reasons: the high mineral potential of the area, the large number of mining claims within the WSA (it is estimated that at least 60 percent of these placer claims could be deemed valid), are the presence of large tracts of private inholdings which have a high potential for development and access needs. Additionally, the WSA has low wilderness values and because of it's irregular shape and high public demand for use-effective management of the area as wilderness would be difficult.

The WSA lends itself to other resource uses. Under the Bureau's recommendation this area will remain open for mineral exploration and development due to the high potential for the occurrence of locatable minerals in the entire WSA as is evidenced by the large number of placer claims present throughout the WSA.




The private inholdings, which have potential for development, and the mining claims with a high potential for valid existing rights (estimated to be 60 percent of all placer claims present), will require motorized access. Development of mining claims which are found to have valid existing rights could impair the area's wilderness values with or without wilderness designation. The area's trails and firebreaks which total approximately seven miles will continue to be used.




The irregular shape combined with a lack of topographical or cultural features to delineate the boundaries would make managing the area as wilderness difficult. Extensive signing, and in specific cases, fencing of the boundaries would be necessary. The cherry-stemmed road running along the ridgeline of Telegraph Hill detracts from the natural character of the area.



R 16 E R 17 E

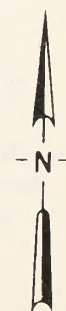
R 17 E R 18 E

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|-------------------------------|
|  | NONE |  | RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS |
|  | LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS | | |

- | | |
|---|--------------|
|  | SPLIT ESTATE |
|  | STATE |
|  | PRIVATE |

**Merced River
Proposal
MAP-1**

0 1 2 3
MILES



040-203
JUNE, 1988

TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	12,959
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		181
Total		<u>13,140</u>
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Study Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	12,959
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>12,959</u>

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The Merced River WSA generally appears to have been affected by the forces of nature with human influences unnoticeable for the most part. An abandoned railroad grade parallels the Merced River through the center of the WSA. Other abandoned projects occurring in the canyon include a diversion dam, a powerhouse foundation and old mining developments located throughout the WSA. All of these projects have been abandoned and the area can be returned to substantially natural condition by hard labor and/or natural processes. Numerous firebreaks and ways are located throughout the WSA but are, for the most part, substantially unnoticeable.

2. Solitude: The area's topographic variation and dense vegetation combine to form outstanding opportunities for solitude.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and unconfined recreation: Outstanding opportunities for water-related primitive and unconfined types of recreation can be found along the Merced River. Some unmaintained foot trails currently exist in the unit and provide opportunities for hiking and backpacking. Dense, low-lying vegetation covers the area restricting human movement and limiting opportunities for primitive or unconfined recreation.
4. Special features: The Merced River flows for four miles through the WSA and offers outstanding opportunities for water-related activities such as whitewater rafting.

B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS)

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 12,959 acres of the Sierran Forest/Chaparral ecosystem. The Merced River WSA would not increase the diversity of the types of ecosystems represented in the NWPS.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
Sierran Forest/ Chaparral	8	68,312	1	3,588
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
Sierran Forest/ Chaparral	8	68,312	1	3,588

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of 14 major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population centers.

Table 3 - Wilderness Opportunities for Residents of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	<u>NWPS areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>California</u>				
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Fresno	35	4,048,852	28	460,790
Merced	33	3,957,550	25	348,753
Modesto	36	4,126,963	81	1,722,326
Sacramento	46	5,001,817	87	2,479,541
Salinas-Seaside-Monterey	24	3,676,896	45	644,415
San Francisco-Oakland	39	4,473,002	39	565,614
San Jose	27	3,765,512	29	352,748
Santa Cruz	27	3,765,512	32	407,890
Santa Rosa-Petaluma	10	888,579	12	134,167
Stockton	35	4,061,833	46	601,496
Vallejo-Napa-Fairfield	44	4,832,667	74	2,100,862
Visalia-Tulare-Porterville	34	4,431,635	61	1,681,921
Yuba City	44	4,951,805	85	2,459,500

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas:
There are no other BLM WSAs within 50 air miles of the Merced River WSA. The Yosemite National Park Wilderness is 20 miles to the East. The Emigrant Wilderness Area in Stanislaus National Forest is 40 miles to the northeast and the Ansel Adams Wilderness Area is 40 miles southeast in the Sierra National Forest.

C. Manageability

The Merced River WSA is manageable as wilderness, but only with difficulty. Manageability problems include the overall irregular shape with sectional (rather than topographic or cultural features) boundaries, leading to difficult recognition on the ground. Frequent signing, detailed maps and intensive patrolling along various segments of the border could be required to insure the integrity of the unit. An estimated 60% of the placer claims could have valid existing rights and the potential for full development. Development of mining claims which are found to have valid existing rights could impair the area's wilderness values with or without wilderness designation. Private and state inholdings, including Telegraph Hill, have some potential for incompatible development. The cherry-stemmed road leading to the top of Telegraph Hill, while providing access to the unit, also opens up parts of the area to the vulnerability of off-road vehicle trespass within topographic limitations.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of information known at the time of the preliminary suitability recommendations: The Merced River WSA is in the Merced River Geology-Energy Minerals (G-E-M) Resource Area. A G-E-M report was written in March 1982. This report was updated in 1986. The data contained in these reports was used in the Wilderness Recommendations Central California Study Areas Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in 1987. The EIS stated that the WSA has high potential for jade, placer gold and lode gold.

The 1982 G-E-M report shows that nearly every drainage in the WSA has been mined for placer gold. Placer mining (mostly suction dredging) continues today on mining claims on the Merced River, north fork of the Merced River, Sherlock Creek, and Solomon Gulch. During the gold rush period, the entire length of David Gulch was heavily mined. Placer gold has been produced from the active bed of rivers and creeks, from high bench gravels, well above the active watercourses, and from ground sluicing the surface of lode mines. The high bench gravels were worked by hydraulic mining as in the case of the Coleman Mine on the north fork of the Merced River and underground drifting which occurred in the placers along Sherlock Creek.

The 1986 G-E-M report states that a portion of the Mother Lode vein system cuts the western edge of the WSA. There are eight jade mines or prospects in this area which were primarily developed during the 1960s. There is also a talc prospect and possibly gold prospects (see: Evans and Bowen, 1977, California Division of Mines and Geology Map Sheet 36).

Lode gold mining has occurred in many places in the WSA. The Cat Town Mining District which lies almost entirely within the WSA has yielded a minimum of 3,300 ounces of gold (\$1.5 million at \$450/oz.). The Quartz Mountain is immediately east of the WSA boundary. It produced about 87,000 ounces of gold (approximately \$40 million at \$450/oz.). In the southeast corner of the WSA is the extension of the French Mine which produced around 20,000 ounces of gold (approximately \$9 million at \$450/oz.). Adjacent to the southeast, the Shroeder mine produced about 15,000 ounces of gold (approximately \$6.8 million at \$450/oz.). Often the quartz veins developed by these mines extend into the WSA. Mines and claims in the WSA are located

on the same trends developed by previously productive mines that are within and outside of the WSA. At the time of the EIS (1987) BLM records identified 140 unpatented placer claims and 69 unpatented lode claims in the WSA.

2. Summary of significant new mineral resource data collected since the suitability recommendation, which should be considered in the final recommendation: No U.S. Geologic Survey (USGS) or U.S. Bureau of Mines (BOM) mineral surveys were conducted in the WSA. C.T. Herzig (1985, Master's Thesis, State University of New York, Stony Brook) completed a thorough study of the Jurassic rocks within the WSA. This is the most complete study of geology in this area to date. Herzig identified Jurassic hypabassal intrusions which were not previously identified. The Odell Mine known for rich pockets of free gold, occurs along a contact with this rock.

There exists a total of 17 placer plans of operation most of which are small-scale. There were eight plans on the Merced River, six on the north fork, one on Solomon Gulch and two on Sherlock Creek. Two lode plans of operation have been received. In addition to these, there are two unpatented tunnel sites in the unsuitable part of the WSA. This new data supports the EIS findings that the entire WSA has high potential for gold. The portion of the WSA within the Mother Lode vein system has a high potential for jade.

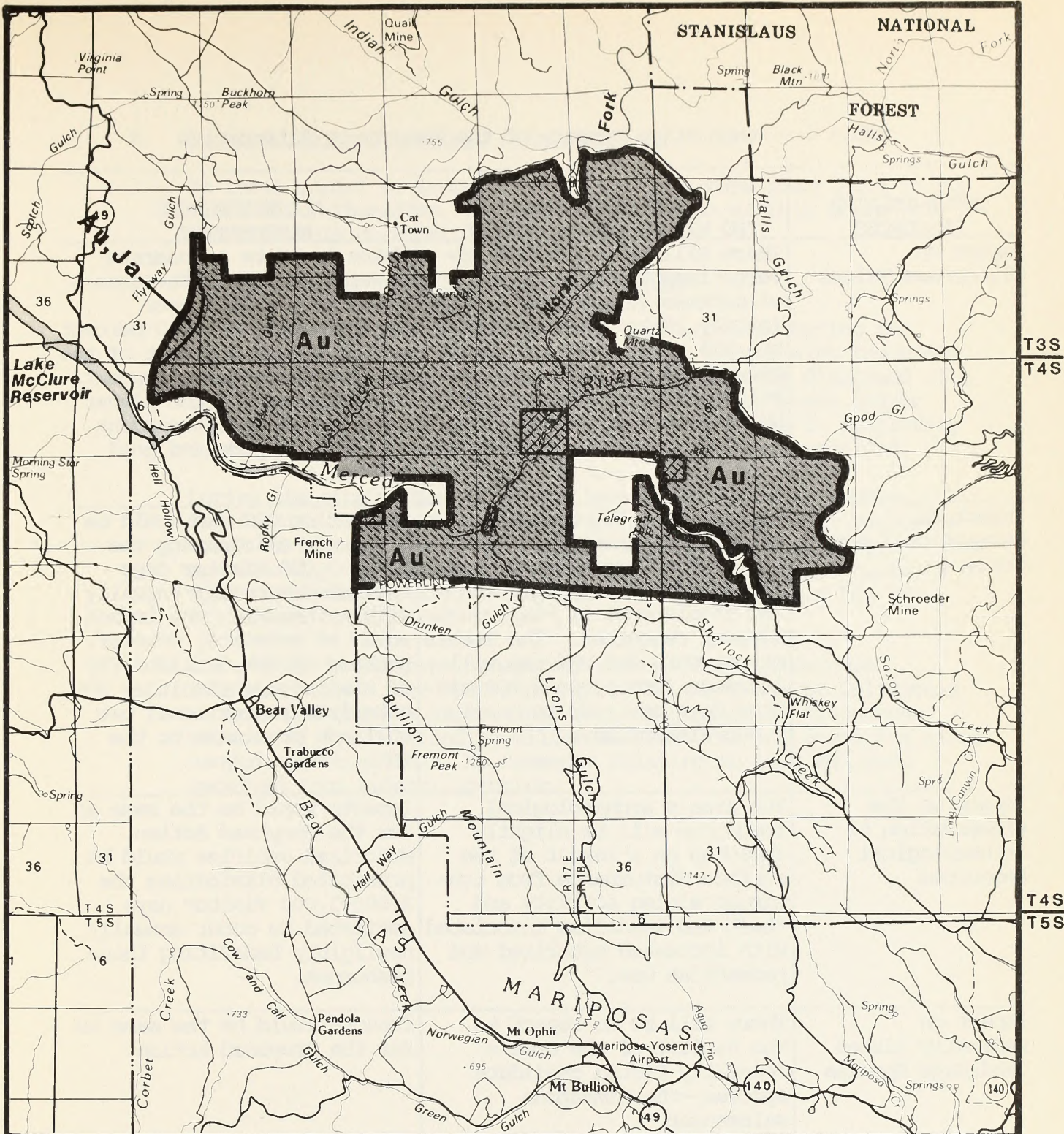
Interest in mineral exploration is further indicated by the following BLM mineral records dated March 25, 1988:

Table 4 - Mining Claims

TYPE	NO.			ACRES		
	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL
Mining Claims						
Lode	0	57	57	0	1140	1140
Placer	0	102	102	0	4080	4080
Mill Sites	0	7	7	0	35	35
Total	0	166	166	0	5255	5255

E. Impacts on Resources

The following table summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for all alternatives considered including designation or non designation of the entire area as wilderness. (For a full explanation of this summary, refer to the Central California Study Areas - Wilderness Final Environmental Impact Statement.)



R 16 E
R 17 E

R 17 E R 18 E

NONE

Recommended for
Wilderness

Recommended for
Non Wilderness

Land outside WSA
Recommended for
Wilderness

Split Estate

State

Private

Explanation

High Potential for the
Occurrence of Energy and/or
Non-energy Minerals

Moderate Potential for the
Occurrence of Energy and/or
Non-energy Minerals

M

Moderate Mineral Potential
Location in a High Mineral
Potential Area

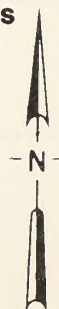
H

High Mineral Potential
Location in a Moderate Mineral
Potential Area

Commodity Symbols

Au Gold

Ja Jade



**Merced River
Mineral Resource Potential**

0 1 2 3
MILES

**Map-2
040-203**

Table 5 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impact on Wilderness Values	There will be a moderate adverse impact on the area's wilderness values over approximately 15 to 20 percent of the WSA as a result of continued ORV use and the exploration and development of the WSA's placer and lode claims.	There would be a moderate adverse impact on the area's wilderness values over approximately 8 to 10 percent of the WSA as a result of the exploration and development of 60 percent of the placer gold claims and 20 percent of the lode jade and gold claims.
Impact on Recreational ORV Use	Recreational ORV use will be slightly enhanced as a result of the road improvements associated with the exploration and development of the area's mineral resources. The levels of recreational ORV use will increase from 2,500-3,000 visitor days per year to nearly 4,000 visitor days.	Recreation ORV use would be foregone, eliminating the 2,500-3,000 visitor days estimated to occur annually within the WSA. The impact would be moderate, however, because of the availability of similar opportunities for motorized recreational use on lands proximate to the WSA.
Impact on the Preservation of Archaeological Resources	The area's archaeological resources will be slightly impacted as a result of the surface disturbance from continued mining activity and theft and vandalism associated with increased motorized and pedestrian use.	Impacts would be the same as for the Proposed Action. Motorized vehicles would be prohibited eliminating the 2,500-3,000 visitor days estimated to occur annually, negligibly benefiting these resources.
Impact on Federally Listed Candidate Species	There will be no impact to the habitat of the area's federally listed candidate species--the Limestone salamander.	Impacts would be the same as for the Proposed Action.
Impact on Mineral Exploration and Development	There will be no impact on mineral exploration and development.	Less than half of the area's 209 lode and placer claims would be explored/developed. Future mining activity would be foregone.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local social or economic considerations were identified in the Final EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA - Specific Public Comments

A few comments relating to this WSA were received during the wilderness inventory phase. Some comments agreed with the WSA's boundary as described by BLM, while other comments disagreed with the suggested boundary adjustments along various roads and/or mining disturbances. In addition, recommendations to completely drop the WSA from consideration as wilderness were received.

During the study phase, a public hearing was held in Fresno, California. During the public hearing and the comment period, a total of 52 comments were received, both oral and written, related specifically to this unit. Ten comments supported the Bureau's no wilderness alternative. Forty-two comments supported the all wilderness alternative.

The County of Mariposa concurred with BLM's no-wilderness recommendation. The Resources Agency of the State of California recommended the WSA as suitable for designation as wilderness because of its outstanding wilderness features and primitive river canyon opportunities. No comments relating to this WSA were received from Federal agencies.

Panoche Hills North

CA-040-301A

PANOCHIE HILLS NORTH WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CA-040-301A)

1. THE STUDY AREA — 6,631 acres

The Panoche Hills North WSA is located in the northwest portion of Fresno County. It is located within the Coast Range of central California, approximately 25 miles south of Los Banos. The WSA includes 6,631 acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The WSA is bounded on the north by a powerline, private land and a road, on the west by the Panoche access road and private land, and on the south and east by a livestock management road (which separates this unit from the Panoche Hills South WSA (CA-040-301B)).

The WSA is located just west of the San Joaquin Valley and includes steep rugged terrain accentuated by intermittent drainages. Elevations vary from approximately 800 to 2,600 feet above sea level. Vegetation within the WSA is primarily annual grasses and forbs interspersed with low-growing shrubs of the California Steppe ecosystem. A few junipers and yucca occur at higher elevations.

The WSA lies within the Panoche National Cooperative Land and Wildlife Management Area (NCLWMA) established on August 11, 1961 by Public Land Order No. 2460. The NCLWMA is cooperatively managed with the California Department of Fish and Game (CDF&G). The Panoche/Coalinga Rare, Threatened and Endangered (RTE) Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) overlaps the northwest portion of this WSA. Additionally, the northeast portion of the WSA was included in the Moreno Paleontological ACEC. Both ACECs were designated by the Hollister Resource Management Plan (RMP) in 1984. The former was established to protect RTE animals while the latter was to protect significant paleontological resources and sensitive plants.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Suitability recommendations were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Central California Study Areas. A summary of the area's wilderness values was included in the Final EIS. Two different suitability recommendations were analyzed in the EIS: all wilderness and no wilderness.

2.	<u>RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE</u> ---	0	acres recommended for wilderness
		6,631	BLM acres recommended for non-wilderness

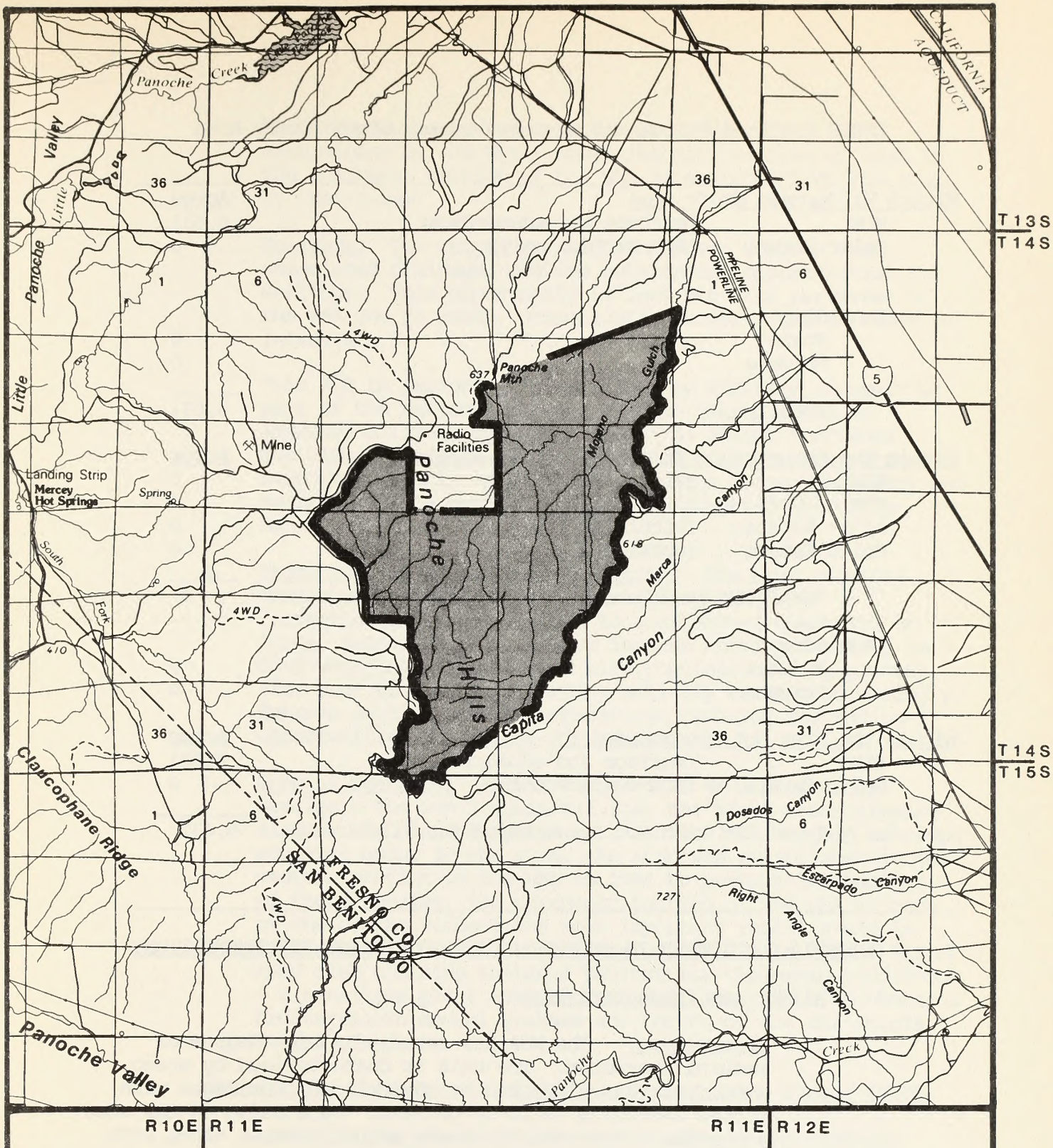
No wilderness is the recommendation for this WSA. The entire acreage in the WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. The all-wilderness alternative is considered to be the environmentally preferred alternative as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The no-wilderness alternative will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The WSA is recommended non-suitable for the following reasons: the moderate potential for oil and gas exploration and development, the low potential for diatomite, gypsite, marl, phosphate and uranium mineral deposits, and the continuance of the Panoche NCLWMA, outweigh the area's wilderness values. Effective management of the area as wilderness would be difficult.



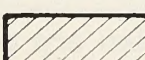
The WSA lends itself to other resource uses. Under the Bureau's recommendation this area will remain open for oil and gas exploration and development due to the moderate potential for the occurrence of oil and gas reserves in the WSA. In addition, the WSA has low potential for the occurrence of other mineral deposits mentioned above.

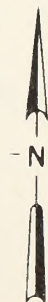
Being part of the Panoche NCLWMA, the area is managed by the BLM in cooperation with the CDF&G for the benefit of wildlife resources. Both agencies have been involved in water developments and silt catchment basins which have significantly improved the habitat for upland game species. Wilderness designation would constrain management options, including motorized vehicle access to install additional water developments and/or silt catchment basins.

The area's size combined with a lack of natural topographic barriers or cultural features to delineate the boundaries would make managing the area as wilderness difficult. Extensive signing, and in specific cases, fencing of the boundaries would be necessary. There are approximately seven miles of routes of travel including primitive ways and other unmaintained routes of access which will remain available for vehicle use.



- | | | |
|---|---|----------------------------|
|  | NONE | RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS | |
|  | LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS | |

- | | |
|---|--------------|
|  | SPLIT ESTATE |
|  | STATE |
|  | PRIVATE |



**Panoche Hills North
Proposal
MAP-1**

0 1 2 3
MILES

040-301A
JUNE, 1988

TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	6,631
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
Total		<u>6,631</u>
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Study Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<u>0</u>
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	6,631
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>6,631</u>

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The WSA has retained a high degree of natural character. The unit is characterized by steep, rugged terrain dissected by several deep drainages with slopes averaging 30 to 50 percent. Vegetation of the area is predominately Mediterranean annual grasses along with forbs and low shrubs, with juniper and yucca occurring at higher elevations.

The WSA remains relatively free from man's influence. Some OHV tracks and exploratory mining pits occur within the WSA. There are numerous improved springs, guzzlers and silt basins for wildlife enhancement located within the WSA. Most of these facilities are accessible by unimproved ways.

These improvements and ways do not detract from the naturalness of the WSA. Approximately one mile of road in the southwest portion of the WSA is excluded from the area by cherrystem.

2. Solitude: The rugged terrain, the steep canyons and associated drainages provide outstanding opportunities for solitude. This opportunity is less near the perimeter of the WSA due to roads, communication towers, and/or views of Interstate 5.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and unconfined recreation: The area provides good opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreational pursuits common to a grassland community in steep, rugged terrain. These include hunting, hiking, and bird-watching. Annual game bird populations vary greatly from year to year with hunting activity varying accordingly. Extreme daytime summer temperatures restrict recreational opportunities during the dry season.
4. Special features: Four Endangered or sensitive animal species - the San Joaquin kit fox, the blunt-nosed leopard lizard, the giant kangaroo rat, and the San Joaquin antelope squirrel occur in the area. An ACEC was established in the western portion of the WSA in 1984 to protect the habitat of these species. The northeast portion of the WSA is part of one of the richest and most important fossil areas in California, and was also designated an ACEC in 1984. This ACEC also contains suitable habitat for the green fiddleneck - a sensitive plant species. In addition, the area contains Mediterranean annual grasses and shrubs of the California Steppe ecosystem.

B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS)

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 6,631 acres of the California Grassland/California Steppe ecosystem. Wilderness designation of this WSA would add a new landform-ecosystem to the NWPS. The WSA's California Grassland Province, California Steppe landform-ecosystem, is not currently represented in the NWPS.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
California Grassland/ California Steppe	0	0	2	22,621
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
California Grassland/ California Steppe	0	0	2	22,621

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of 17 major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of these population centers.

Table 3 - Wilderness Opportunities for Residents of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>California</u>				
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Fresno	35	4,048,852	28	460,790
Los Angeles-				
Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
Merced	33	3,957,550	25	348,753
Modesto	36	4,126,963	81	1,722,326
Oxnard-Ventura	23	2,195,198	85	2,703,260
Sacramento	46	5,001,817	87	2,479,541
Salinas-Seaside-				
Monterey	24	3,676,896	45	644,415
San Francisco-Oakland	39	4,473,002	39	565,614
San Jose	27	3,765,512	29	352,748
Santa Barbara-				
Santa Maria-Lompoc	20	1,166,142	35	528,590
Santa Cruz	27	3,765,512	32	407,890
Santa Rosa-Petaluma	10	888,579	12	134,167
Stockton	35	4,061,833	46	601,496
Vallejo-Napa-Fairfield	44	4,832,667	74	2,100,862
Visalia-Tulare-				
Porterville	34	4,431,635	61	1,681,921
Yuba City	44	4,951,805	85	2,459,500

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The Pinnacles Contiguous is the only BLM WSA within 50 air miles recommended for partial-wilderness designation. The Pinnacles and the Ventana Wilderness Areas are located approximately 25 and 50 miles, respectively, southwest of the WSA. The former is managed by Pinnacles National Monument and the latter by the Los Padres National Forest.

C. Manageability

The Panoche Hills North WSA is manageable as wilderness, but only with difficulty. Manageability problems include the lack of natural barriers to vehicle use on existing ways and the size of the WSA. Although closed to motorcycle use since 1970, there continues to be some trespass use due to the ease of access into the area. Frequent signing, fencing and patrolling, along various segments of the border would be required to insure the integrity of the unit.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of information known at the time of the preliminary suitability recommendation: The geology and minerals potential of the Panoche Hills North WSA is described in a BLM report titled "Geology and Mineral Potential of the Panoche Hills, California" (L. Vredenberg, 1982). This data was used in the Affected Environment section of the Wilderness Recommendations Central California Study Areas Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) which is dated February 20, 1988.

The EIS states that there is potential for the occurrence of diatomite, gypsite, marl, phosphate and uranium. The EIS states that mineral development interest is low and that BLM records in July, 1986 showed one unpatented mining claim on the western boundary of the WSA. No material sale sites were present.

The EIS states that there was oil and gas leasing on nearly 70% of the WSA. There was historic drilling exploration for oil and gas within three miles of the eastern WSA boundary. Two producing oil fields exist near the WSA; i.e., the Vallecitos field ten miles to the south and the Cheney Ranch field eight miles to the east. A similar geologic setting was recognized in the northeast corner of the WSA. This

geologic environment was recognized as a possible source for petroleum. The EIS stated that the WSA has low potential for oil and gas. Marl was known to have been excavated to the west and gypsite to the east of the WSA. The EIS stated that there was low potential for these minerals.

2. Summary of significant new mineral resource data collected since the suitability recommendation, which should be considered in the final recommendation: Because this WSA was recommended nonsuitable by BLM in the EIS, no U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) or U.S. Bureau of Mines (BOM) mineral surveys were made for the Panoche Hills North WSA.

Based on new "confidential" information purchased from GeoMap Company in 1988, there has been a significant increase in the amount of data available to the BLM for this WSA. The new information is contained in a map titled "Structural Analysis of the San Joaquin Basin" (GeoMap, 1988 California Regional Base Map No. Cal-102 for the San Joaquin Basin).

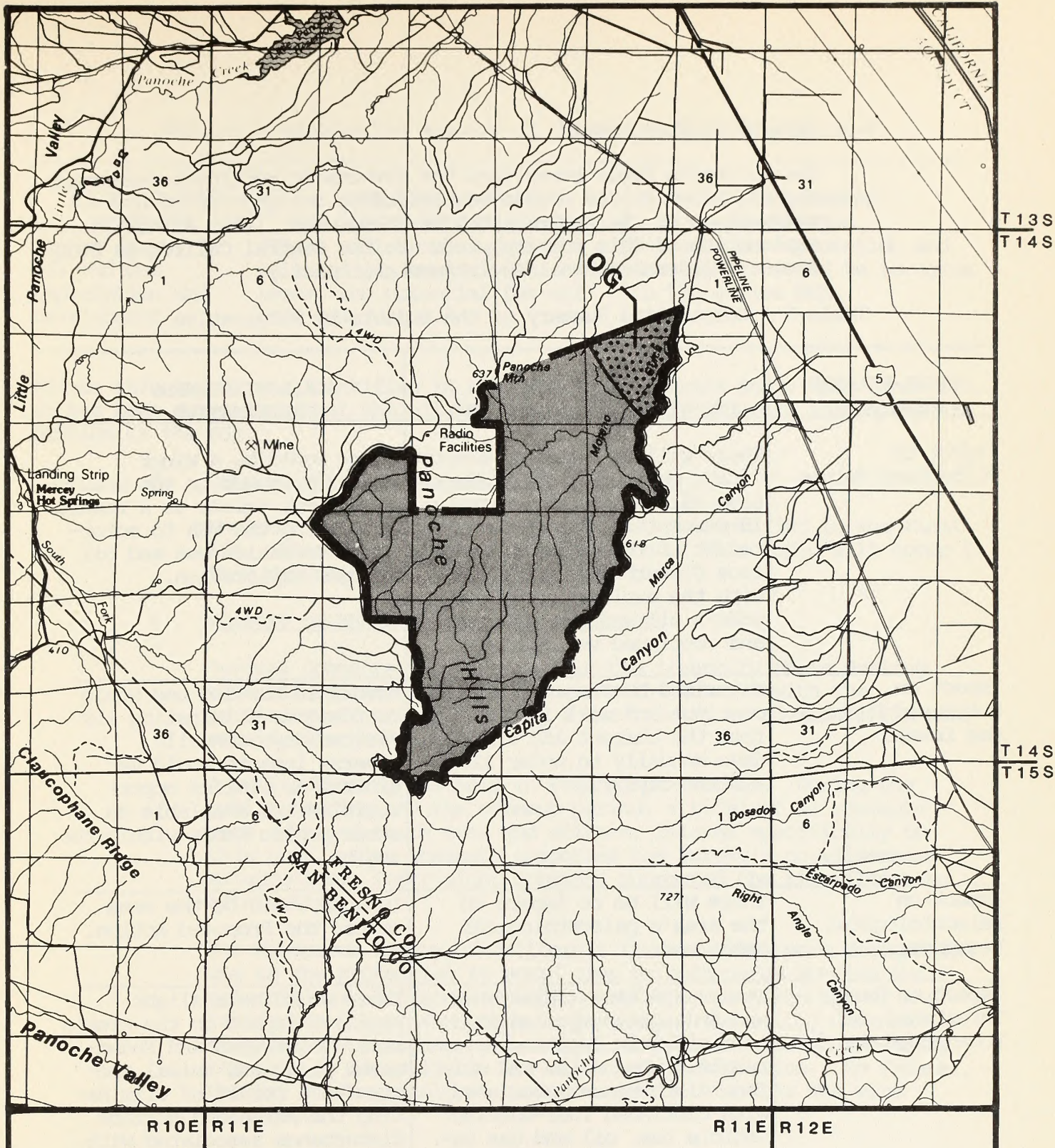
The data provided by this map, along with a more detailed investigation of both the surface and subsurface geologic data made by BLM geologist T. Moore in April, 1988, shows the existence of hydrocarbon deposits that have yet to be exploited.

Interest in mineral exploration is further indicated by BLM records dated March 25, 1988. These show two unpatented lode mining claims along the west-central border of the WSA. There are no oil or gas leases or applications in the WSA as of March 25, 1988 (Table 4).

Based upon the re-assessment of both new and existing data, a different mineral potential is assigned to portions of the Panoche Hills North WSA. There is moderate potential for hydrocarbons in the northeast corner of the WSA. All other mineral resources are still considered to be low as per the previous interpretations.

Table 4 - Mining Claims

TYPE	NO.			ACRES		
	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL	SUITABLE	NONSUIT.	TOTAL
Mining Claims						
Lode	0	2	2	0	40	40
Placer	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mill Sites	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	2	2	0	40	40



E. Impacts on Resources

The following table summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for all alternatives considered including designation or non-designation of the entire areas as wilderness. (For a full explanation of this summary, refer to the Central California Study Areas - Wilderness Final Environmental Impact.)

Table 5 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impact on Wilderness Values	There will be a minor, adverse impact on the area's wilderness values on approximately 15 percent of the WSA as a result of the noise and surface disturbance associated with the exploration of the area's oil and gas resources and continued vehicle use.	There would be a minor positive impact on the area's wilderness values as a result of closing the WSA to motorized recreation use and oil and gas exploration.
Impact on Motorized Hunting Use Levels	Motorized hunting use will continue and will increase from the current 250 visitor days annually to under 325 visitor-days.	Motorized hunting use would be foregone eliminating 250 visitor-days annually. Adverse impacts would be minimal as similar opportunities are available on other public lands within the region.
Impact on Paleontological Resources	There will be no impact on the area's paleontological resources.	Impacts would be the same as for the Proposed Action.
Impact on Rare, Threatened and Endangered Species	The area's Rare, Threatened and Endangered species will be negligibly impacted as a result of the noise and surface disturbance associated with continued four-wheeled vehicle use, oil and gas exploration, and mechanized fire suppression.	There would be a slight positive impact on the area's Rare, Threatened and Endangered plant and animal species as a result of eliminating the noise and surface disturbance associated with motorized vehicle use and oil and gas exploration.

Table 5 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impact on Oil and Gas Exploration and Development	There will be no impact on oil and gas exploration. How- ever, the potential for oil and gas is low.*	Oil and gas exploration and development would be foregone on the entire WSA.

*Since this impact was identified in the Central California Study area final EIS, it has been determined that the oil and gas potential is moderate in the eastern portion of the WSA.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local or economic considerations were identified in the Final EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments

Several comments were received in the inventory phase dealing with mineral and wildlife values in the WSA and with the proximity of roads (including Interstate 5) as adverse influences outside the unit.

A public hearing was held in Fresno, California. During the public hearing and the comment period, a total of 57 comments were received, both oral and written, related specifically to this unit. Nine comments supported the Bureau's no-wilderness alternative. Forty-eight comments supported the all-wilderness alternative.

The Resources Agency of California favored wilderness designation due to the protection it would give to endangered species and paleontological resources and due to non-representation of the California Steppe ecosystem in the NWPS. The agency did not consider OHV trespass as a valid justification for recommending the area as non-suitable for wilderness designation. No Federal, County, or Congressional comments specific to this WSA were received.

Panoche Hills South

CA-040-301B

PANOCHIE HILLS SOUTH WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CA-040-301B)

1. THE STUDY AREA ————— 11,305 acres

The Panoche Hills South WSA is located in the northwestern portion of Fresno County. It is located within the Coast Range of central California, approximately 30 miles south of Los Banos. The WSA includes 11,229 acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land and a private inholding totaling 76 acres (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The WSA is bounded on the northwest by a livestock management road (which separates this unit from the Panoche Hills South WSA (CA-040-301B)) on the west by the Panoche access road and private land, on the south and east by private land, and on the extreme north by a livestock management road.

The WSA is located just west of the San Joaquin Valley and includes very steep rugged terrain accentuated by intermittent drainages. Elevations vary from approximately 700 to 2,500 feet above sea level. Vegetation within the WSA is primarily annual grasses and forbs interspersed with low-growing shrubs of the California Steppe ecosystem. A few junipers and yucca occur at higher elevations.

The WSA lies within the Panoche National Cooperative Land and Wildlife Management Area (NCLWMA) established on August 11, 1961 by Public Land Order No. 2460. The NCLWMA is cooperatively managed with the California Department of Fish and Game (CDF&G), and is managed under current public land laws. Additionally, the eastern edge of the WSA lies within portions of two Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) - the Moreno Paleontological ACEC and the Panoche/Coalinga Rare, Threatened and Endangered (RTE) ACEC. The former was established to protect significant paleontological resources and sensitive plants and the latter to protect RTE animal species. Both ACECs were designated by the Hollister Resource Management Plan (RMP) in 1984.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Suitability recommendations were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Central California Study Areas. A summary of the area's wilderness values was included in the Final EIS. Three different suitability recommendations were analyzed in the EIS: all wilderness, 50% partial wilderness and no wilderness.

2. <u>RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE</u> ---	0	acres recommended for wilderness
	11,229	BLM acres recommended for nonwilderness

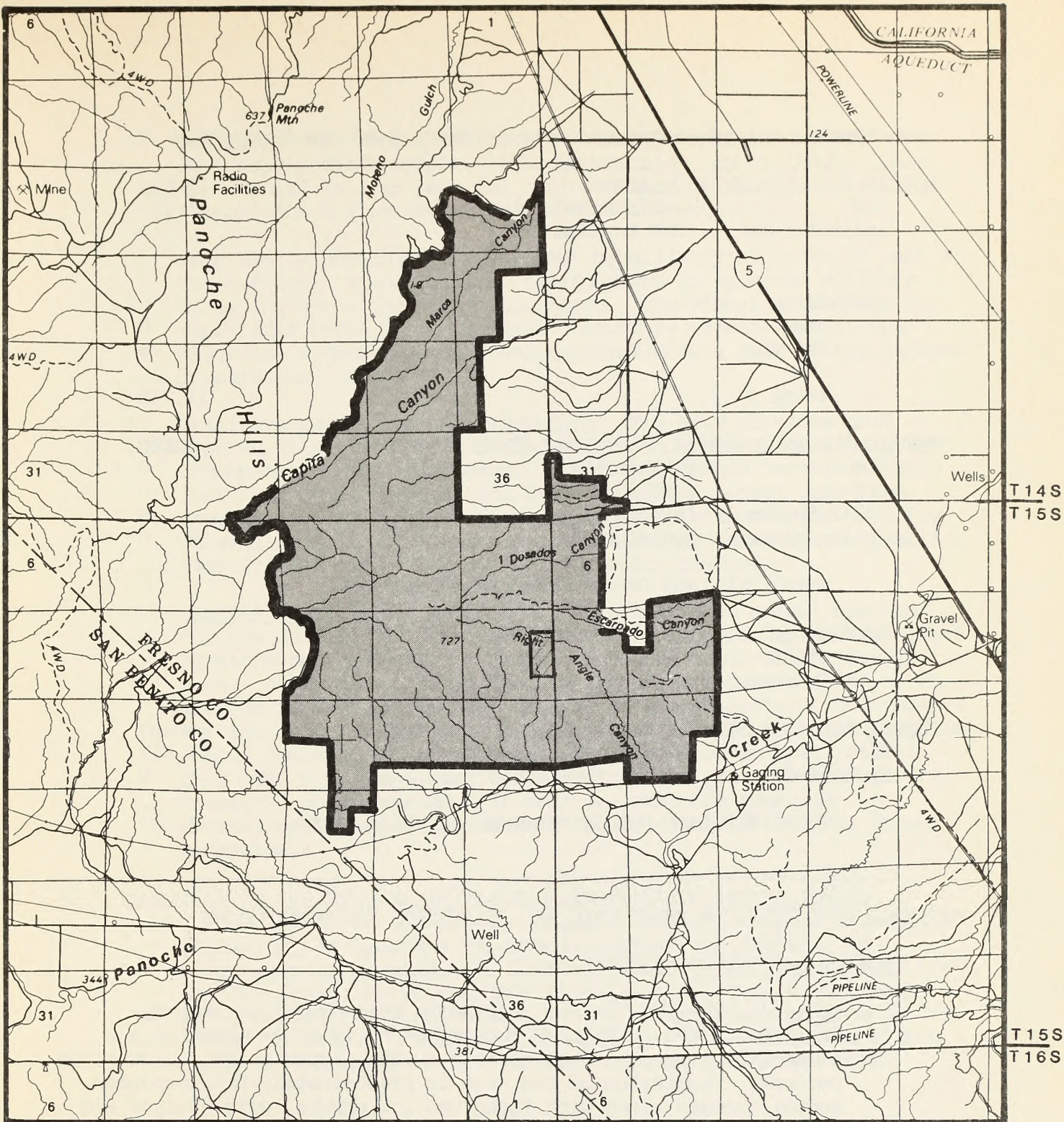
No wilderness is the recommendation for this WSA. The entire acreage in the WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. The all wilderness alternative is considered to be the environmentally preferred alternative as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The no wilderness alternative will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The WSA is recommended nonsuitable for the following reasons: the moderate potential for oil and gas exploration and development, the low potential for diatomite, gypsite, marl, phosphate and uranium mineral deposits, and the continuance of the Panoche NCLWMA, outweigh the area's wilderness values. Effective management of the area as wilderness would be somewhat difficult.

The WSA lends itself to other resource uses. Under the Bureau's recommendation, this area will remain open for oil and gas exploration and development due to the moderate potential for the occurrence of oil and gas reserves in the WSA. In addition, the WSA has low potential for the occurrence of other mineral deposits mentioned above.

Being part of the Panoche NCLWMA, the area is managed in cooperation with the CDF&G for the benefit of wildlife resources. Both agencies have been involved in water developments which have improved the habitat for upland game species. Wilderness designation would constrain future management options including motorized vehicle access to install additional water developments and/or silt catchment basins.

The area's size combined with a lack of topographical or cultural features to delineate the boundaries would make managing the area as wilderness difficult. Extensive signing, and in specific cases, fencing of the boundaries would be necessary. There are approximately ten miles of routes of travel including primitive ways and other unmaintained routes of access which will remain available for vehicular use.



NONE

RECOMMENDED FOR
WILDERNESS

RECOMMENDED FOR
NONWILDERNESS

LAND OUTSIDE WSA
RECOMMENDED FOR
WILDERNESS

SPLIT ESTATE

STATE

PRIVATE

SPLIT ESTATE

STATE

PRIVATE

Panoche Hills South
Proposal
MAP-1

0 1 2 3
MILES

040-301B
JUNE, 1988

TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	11,229
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		76
Total		11,305
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Study Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	11,229
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		11,229

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The WSA has retained a high degree of natural character. The unit is characterized by steep, rugged terrain dissected by several deep drainages with slopes averaging 30 to 50 percent. Vegetation of the area is predominately Mediterranean annual grasses along with forbs and low shrubs, with juniper and yucca occurring at higher elevations.

The WSA remains relatively free from man's influence. Some OHV tracks and exploratory mining pits occur within the WSA. Improved springs and guzzlers for wildlife enhancement are located within the WSA. Most of these facilities are accessible by unimproved ways. These improvements and ways do not detract significantly from the naturalness of the WSA.

2. Solitude: The rugged terrain, the steep canyons and associated drainages provide outstanding opportunities for solitude. This opportunity is less near the perimeter of the WSA due to roads, communication towers, and/or views of Interstate 5.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and unconfined recreation: The area provides good opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreational pursuits common to a grassland community in steep, rugged terrain. These include hunting, hiking, and bird-watching. Annual game bird populations vary greatly from year to year with hunting activity varying accordingly. Extreme daytime summer temperatures restrict recreational opportunities during the dry season.
4. Special features: Four Endangered or sensitive animal species - the San Joaquin kit fox, the blunt-nosed leopard lizard, the giant kangaroo rat, and the San Joaquin antelope squirrel - occur in the area. An ACEC was established in the southeastern portion of the area in 1984 to protect the habitat of these species. The eastern portion of the WSA is part of one of the richest and most important fossil areas in California, and was designated an ACEC in 1984. This ACEC contains suitable habitat for the green fiddleneck - a sensitive plant species. In addition, the WSA contains Mediterranean annual grasses and shrubs of the California Steppe ecosystem.

B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS)

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 11,229 acres of the California Grasslands/California Steppe ecosystem. Wilderness designation of this WSA would add a new landform-ecosystem to the NWPS. The WSA's California Grassland Province-California Steppe landform-ecosystem is not currently represented in the NWPS.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
California Grassland/ California Steppes	0	0	2	18,024
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
California Grassland/ California Steppes	0	0	2	18,024

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of 17 major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of these population centers.

Table 3 - Wilderness Opportunities for Residents of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>California</u>				
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Fresno	35	4,048,852	28	460,790
Los Angeles-				
Long Beach	27	2,876,234	135	4,958,751
Merced	33	3,957,550	25	348,753
Modesto	36	4,126,963	81	1,722,326
Oxnard-Ventura	23	2,195,198	85	2,703,260
Sacramento	46	5,001,817	87	2,479,541
Salinas-Seaside-				
Monterey	24	3,676,896	45	644,415
San Francisco-				
Oakland	39	4,473,002	39	565,614
San Jose	27	3,765,512	29	352,748
Santa Barbara-				
Santa Maria-Lompoc	20	1,166,142	35	528,590
Santa Cruz	27	3,765,512	32	407,890
Santa Rosa-Petaluma	10	888,579	12	134,167
Stockton	35	4,061,833	46	601,496
Vallejo-Napa-				
Fairfield	44	4,832,667	74	2,100,862
Visalia-Tulare-				
Porterville	34	4,431,635	61	1,681,921
Yuba City	44	4,951,805	85	2,459,500

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The Pinnacles Contiguous WSA is the only BLM WSA within 50 air miles recommended for partial-wilderness designation. The Pinnacles and the Ventana Wilderness Areas are located approximately 25 and 50 miles, respectively, southwest of the WSA. The former is managed by Pinnacles National Monument and the latter by the Los Padres National Forest.

C. Manageability

The Panoche Hills South WSA is manageable as wilderness, but only with difficulty. Manageability problems include the lack of natural barriers to vehicle use on existing ways and the small size of the WSA. Although closed to motorcycle use since 1970, there continues to be some trespass use due to the ease of access into the area. Frequent signing, fencing and patrolling along various segments of the border would be required to insure the integrity of the unit.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of information known at the time of the preliminary suitability recommendation: The geology and minerals potential of the Panoche Hills South WSA is described in a BLM internal report titled "Geology and Mineral Potential of the Panoche Hills, California" (L. Vredenberg, 1982). This data was used in the Affected Environment section of the Central California Study Areas Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) which is dated February 20, 1988.

The EIS states that there is potential for the occurrence of diatomite, gypsite, marl, phosphate and uranium. The EIS states that mineral development interest is low and that BLM records in July, 1986 indicated that there were no mining claims in the WSA. No material sale or permit sites were present.

The EIS states that there was one pre-FLPMA oil and gas lease covering 7,570 acres of the WSA. There was historic drilling exploration for oil and gas within three miles of the eastern WSA boundary. Two producing oil fields exist near the WSA, i.e., the Vallecitos field seven miles to the south and the Cheney Ranch field six miles to the east. A similar geologic setting was recognized along the eastern margin of the WSA. This geologic environment was recognized as a possible source for petroleum. The EIS stated that the WSA has low potential for oil and gas. Marl was known to have been excavated to the west and gypsite to the east of the WSA. Uranium is known to occur in diatomite outside the WSA, south of Panoche Creek. The EIS stated that similar occurrences of uranium may exist within the WSA, presumably based on similar geologic environment. The EIS stated that there was low potential for all these minerals.

2. Summary of significant new mineral resource data collected since the suitability recommendation, which should be considered in the final recommendation: Because this WSA was recommended nonsuitable by BLM in the EIS, no U.S. Geological Survey or U.S. Bureau of Mines mineral surveys were conducted for the Panoche Hills South WSA.

Based on new "confidential" information purchased from GeoMap Company in 1988 there has been a significant increase in the amount of data available to the BLM for this WSA. The new information is contained in a map titled "Structural Analysis of the San Joaquin Basin" (GeoMap, 1988 California Regional Base Map No. Cal-102 for the San Joaquin Basin).

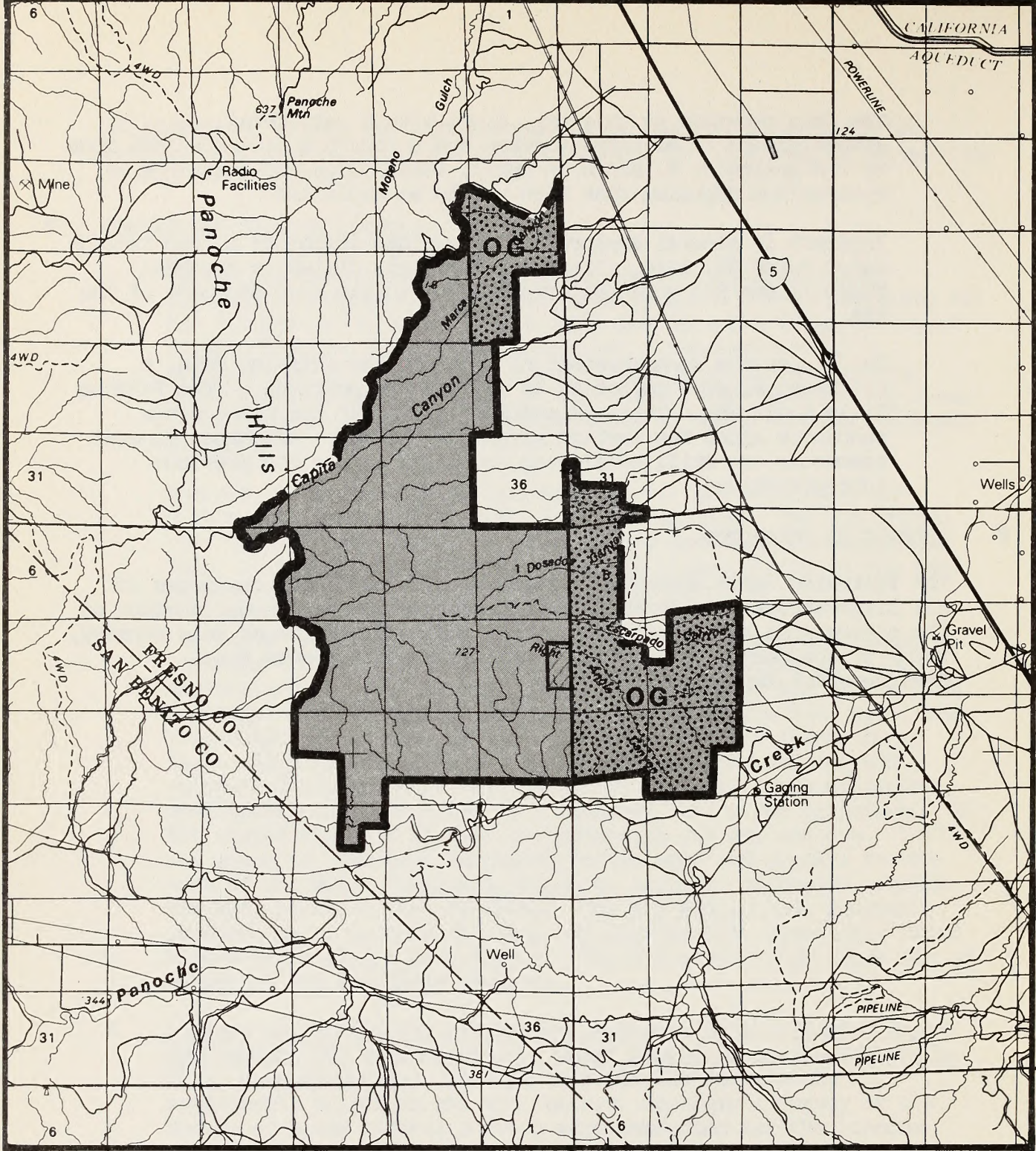
The data provided by this map, along with a more detailed investigation of both the surface and subsurface geologic data made by BLM geologist T. Moore in April, 1988, shows the existence of hydrocarbon deposits that have yet to be exploited.

Interest in mineral exploration is further indicated by BLM records dated March 25, 1988. There are no mining claims in the WSA. There is one 800 acre oil or gas lease in the southern part of the WSA.

Based upon the re-assessment of both new and existing data, a different mineral potential is assigned to portions of the Panoche Hills South WSA. There is moderate potential for hydrocarbon resources along the eastern margin of the WSA. All other mineral resources are still considered to be low as per the previous interpretations.

E. Impacts on Resources

The following table summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for all alternatives considered including designation or non-designation of the entire area as wilderness. (For a full explanation of this summary, refer to the Central California Study Areas - Wilderness Final Environmental Impact Statement.)



T 14 S
T 15 S

T 15 S
T 16 S

R 11 E | R 12 E

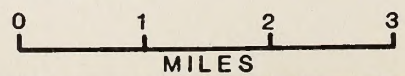
- NONE Recommended for Wilderness
- Recommended for Non Wilderness
- Land outside WSA Recommended for Wilderness
- Split Estate
- State
- Private

- Explanation**
- High Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals
 - Moderate Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals
 - M** Moderate Mineral Potential Location in a High Mineral Potential Area
 - H** High Mineral Potential Location in a Moderate Mineral Potential Area

Commodity Symbols
OG Oil & Gas



**Panoche Hills South
Mineral Resource Potential**



**Map-2
040-301B**

Table 4 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	PARTIAL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impact on Wilderness Values	There will be a minor, adverse impact on the area's wilderness values on 20 to 25 percent of the WSA as a result of the noise and surface disturbance associated with the projected 125 visitor-days of motorized vehicle use and exploration of the area's oil and gas resources.	There would be a minor, positive impact on the area's wilderness values as a result of closing the WSA to motorized recreation use and displacing the 75 visitor days estimated to occur annually along the 10 miles of jeep trails and prohibiting oil and gas exploration. Walk in access for hunting and other visitor use would continue from the edge of the WSA.	There would be a minor, adverse impact on the wilderness values on 15 to 20 percent of the nonsuitable portion of the WSA as a result of continued four-wheeled vehicle use and oil and gas exploration. The noise and surface disturbance associated with the exploration of the area's oil and gas resources would moderately impact these values, but will be short-term since production is not anticipated.
Impact on Paleontological Resources	The area's paleontological resources will be negligibly impacted as a result of continued four-wheeled vehicle use and oil and gas exploration and the special stipulations and conditions placed on surface disturbing activities within the Moreno Paleontological AOEC.	Wilderness designation would negligibly benefit the area's paleontological resources as a result of eliminating motorized vehicle use, oil and gas exploration and the surface disturbances associated with these activities.	Because of the special stipulations and conditions placed on surface disturbing activities in the Moreno AOEC, there would be only negligible adverse impacts on the paleontological resources in the nonsuitable portion of the WSA. Wilderness designation would negligibly benefit these resources in the suitable portion as a result of eliminating motorized vehicle use and oil and gas exploration.
Impact on Paleontological Investigation	There will be no impact on paleontological investigations	There would be a slight adverse impact on paleontological investigations as a result of the limitations placed on motorized vehicle access.	Paleontological investigations (including excavations) would be permitted in both the suitable and nonsuitable portions of the WSA. However, there would be a slight adverse impact on investigations in the suitable portion of the WSA due to the limitations placed on motorized vehicle access.

Table 4 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative (cont.)

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	PARTIAL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impact on RIT&E Species	There will be a minor, adverse impact on the area's rare, threatened and endangered species as a result of the noise and surface disturbance associated with continued four-wheeled vehicle use and oil and gas exploration. Impacts on oil and gas exploration, however, will be short-term since production is not anticipated.	There would be a slight, positive impact on the area's rare, threatened and endangered species as a result of eliminating the noise and surface disturbance associated with motorized vehicle use and oil and gas exploration.	Impact for the rare, threatened, and endangered species in the nonsuitable portion of the WSA would be the same as those described under the Proposed Action. In the suitable portion of the WSA, the 30 visitor days of motorized vehicle use would be eliminated and oil and gas exploration would be prohibited, slightly benefitting the area's rare, threatened, and endangered plant and animal species.
Impact on Oil and Gas Exploration and Development	There will be no impact on oil and gas exploration. However, the potential for development is low.*	Oil and gas exploration and development would be foregone on the entire WSA.	There would be no impact on oil and gas exploration on the 5,067 acres not recommended suitable. However, oil and gas exploration would be foregone on the remaining 5,000 acres recommended suitable.

*Since this impact was identified in the Central California Study Areas EIS, it has been determined that the oil and gas potential is moderate in the eastern portion of the WSA.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local or economic considerations were identified in the Final EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments

Several comments were received in the inventory phase dealing with mineral and wildlife values in the WSA and with the proximity of roads (including Interstate 5) as adverse influences outside the unit.

A public hearing was held in Fresno, California. During the public hearing and comment period, a total of 59 comments were received, both oral and written, related specifically to this unit. Nine comments supported the Bureau's no-wilderness alternative. Forty-seven comments supported the all-wilderness alternative. Three comments supported the partial-wilderness alternative.

The Resources Agency of California favored wilderness designation due to the protection it would give to endangered species and paleontological resources and due to non-representation of the California Steppe ecosystem in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The agency did not consider OHV trespass as a valid justification for recommending the area as unsuitable for wilderness designation. No Federal, County, or Congressional comments specific to this WSA were received.

Pinnacles

CA-040-303

PINNACLES WILDERNESS CONTIGUOUS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CA-040-303)

1. THE STUDY AREA --- 5,949 acres

The WSA is located in both western San Benito and eastern Monterey Counties. It is located in the Gabilan Range of the Coastal Mountains approximately 25 miles southeast of Salinas, California. The WSA includes 5,949 acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land. There are no State lands or private inholdings within this WSA (see Map 1 and Table 1).

This WSA contains five separate parcels of roadless, BLM-administered lands which adjoin designated wilderness located within the Pinnacles National Monument. Each parcel is bounded on at least one side by wilderness areas within the Pinnacles National Monument. The remaining sides are bounded by private lands, or by roaded BLM lands.

All of the separate WSA parcels contain steep, rugged topography surrounding small canyons. The topography of the area varies from approximately 800 to 2,750 feet above sea level. The primary vegetation of the WSA is chemise with some oak and pine occurring along intermittent creeks. The separate parcels of this WSA blend in naturally with the rugged terrain of the Pinnacles National Monument Wilderness Area.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Suitability recommendations were analyzed in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Central California Study Areas. A summary of the area's wilderness values was included in the Final EIS. Three different suitability recommendations were analyzed in the EIS: all wilderness, partial wilderness - recommending 33 percent of the area as suitable, and no wilderness.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE --- 1,983 acres recommended
for wilderness
3,966 BLM acres recommended for non-
wilderness

Thirty-three percent of this WSA or 1,983 acres recommended for designation as wilderness, and 3,966 acres in this WSA are released for uses other than wilderness. The all-wilderness alternative is considered to be the environmentally preferred alternative as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The 33% partial wilderness alternative will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts on the non-suitable portion of the WSA.

Partial wilderness is the recommendation for this unit based on the following rationale: The area recommended as suitable within the watershed/viewshed of the Pinnacles National Monument; management of the Monument's wilderness area would be enhanced by extending the wilderness

boundaries to easily identifiable topographic features, the recommendation would include a more complete ecosystem and many outstanding features similar to those found within the National Monument.

The portions of the WSA which are recommended as suitable for wilderness designation have their boundaries delineated along the ridgelines. The suitable areas can be seen from within the National Monument and are generally part of the Monument's watershed. Management of these portions of the WSA will complement management of the adjacent wilderness by encompassing a more complete watershed under wilderness management. Overall, the wilderness characteristics for the area are outstanding. The imprint of man's work is substantially unnoticeable throughout the unit. A variety of canyons and ridges serve to isolate the visitor from outside sounds and provide excellent opportunities for solitude.

The remainder of the Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous WSA (3,966 acres) is recommended as non-suitable for wilderness designation. The manageability problems associated with legal, rather than topographic, boundaries would thus be eliminated. This portion would be managed as outlined in the Hollister Resource Management Plan. This management provides for continued livestock grazing, prescribed burning for brushland management in conjunction with private landowners and the National Monument, and maintenance of visual resources within the viewshed of the Monument. Management of these lands would become more effective with the establishment of the easily identifiable boundary with the partial-wilderness recommendation. There are approximately six miles of routes of travel including primitive ways and other maintained routes of access contained in the WSA.

TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	5,949
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
Total		<u>5,949</u>
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Study Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	1,983
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		<u>1,983</u>
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	3,966
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		<u>3,966</u>

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: The WSA has retained a high degree of natural character. The steep, rugged topography and small canyons are covered with chemise, oak and pine along intermittent creeks. The creeks provide important riparian habitat for wildlife, are aesthetically pleasing, and are probably the most commonly used routes of travel. The parcels of this WSA blend in naturally with the rugged terrain within the Pinnacles National Monument Wilderness Area.

The primary imprint of man's work within the area is associated with firebreaks constructed along some ridgelines. Some vegetation manipulation has occurred in the northern and southern parcels of the WSA. Portions of the WSA located north and east of the Pinnacles Wilderness were burned by a wildfire during the summer of 1978. During fire control operations, numerous

firebreaks were constructed but were reseeded and have largely returned to natural conditions. A prescribed burn escaped in 1984 in a portion of the WSA north of the Monument Wilderness Area. New fire breaks were constructed to control this fire. Firebreaks have been reseeded with native shrubs and are returning to natural conditions. The firebreaks and vegetation manipulation projects are substantially unnoticeable and do not detract significantly from the naturalness of the unit.

2. Solitude: The variety of terrain, canyons along streams and drainages, and primitive character of the adjacent private ranch lands and Pinnacles National Monument provide outstanding opportunities for solitude.

This WSA is periodically overflowed by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission taking place in approved military operating areas and flight corridors. The visual intrusions and associated noise create periodic temporary effects on solitude which are deemed necessary and acceptable as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and unconfined recreation: The outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation found within the unit are closely associated with the Pinnacles Wilderness and the primitive character of the entire area.
4. Special features: There are spectacular views of the Pinnacles formation within the National Monument from some portions of the WSA, especially the northern parcels. The USFWS Candidate plant species Eriogonum nortonii has been found in one parcel and may occur throughout the area.

B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS)

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 5,949 acres of the California Chaparral/Chaparral ecosystem. The Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous WSA would not increase the diversity of the types of ecosystems represented in the NWPS.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
California Chaparral/ Chaparral	17	462,256	10	81,261
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
California Chaparral/ Chaparral	17	462,256	10	81,261

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of 16 major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of these population centers.

Table 3 - Wilderness Opportunities for Residents of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	<u>NWPS areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>California</u>				
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Fresno	35	4,048,852	28	460,790
Merced	33	3,957,550	25	348,753
Modesto	36	4,126,963	81	1,722,326
Oxnard-Ventura	23	2,195,198	85	2,703,260
Sacramento	46	5,001,817	87	2,479,541
Salinas-Seaside-Monterey	24	3,676,896	45	644,415
San Francisco-Oakland	39	4,473,002	39	565,614
San Jose	27	3,765,512	29	352,748
Santa Barbara-Santa Maria Lompoc	20	1,166,142	35	528,590
Santa Cruz	27	3,765,512	32	407,890
Santa Rosa-Petaluma	10	888,579	12	134,167
Stockton	35	4,061,833	46	601,496
Vallejo-Napa-Fairfield	44	4,832,667	74	2,100,862
Visalia-Tulare-Porterville	34	4,431,635	61	1,681,921
Yuba City	34	4,951,805	85	2,459,500

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: There are no other BLM WSA's within 50 air miles recommended for wilderness designation. The Pinnacles Wilderness Area is adjacent to this WSA and the Ventana Wilderness Area is located approximately 30 miles southeast of the WSA. The former is managed by Pinnacles National Monument and the latter by the Los Padres National Forest.

C. Manageability

The WSA by itself is unmanageable as wilderness due to the size of the parcels and their irregular boundaries which do not follow topographic features.

The area recommended as suitable is manageable as wilderness. Management would be coordinated with management of the adjacent Pinnacles National Monument.

There have been no conflicts over water rights to the area's streams and springs in the past, and none are anticipated in the future.

Military overflights in this WSA must be considered to maintain the integrity of the existing and future national defense mission as well as the wilderness resource.

D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of information known at the time of the preliminary suitability recommendation: The energy and minerals potential of the Pinnacles Wilderness contiguous WSA is addressed in the Affected Environment section, Wilderness Recommendations, Central California Study Areas, Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), dated February 20, 1987.

The EIS states that mineral development interest is low, since there were no mining claims, mineral leases or mineral material sales on record with BLM in the WSA. However, the EIS does indicate that there was historic exploration within the Pinnacles National Monument. This exploration centered around a swarm of rhyolite dikes in the central part of the Monument. A similar geologic setting was recognized in the southeastern and northwestern parts of the WSA. The geologic environment was recognized as a possible source for copper, molybdenum, gold, silver, and uranium deposits. The EIS stated that there was low potential for all these minerals.

In March, 1982 a literature search was conducted by a BLM mineral specialist (L. Vredenburg, "Geology and Mineral Resources in the Pinnacles Contiguous Wilderness Study Area"). A gold and molybdenum occurrence was recognized but the potential was considered to be low.

2. Summary of significant new mineral resource data collected since the suitability recommendation, which should be considered in the final recommendation: In 1984 and 1985 the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and U.S. Bureau of Mine (BOM) conducted mineral surveys for the Pinnacles Wilderness Contiguous WSA. Subsequent to this study, a published report, USGS Bulletin 1705-C was issued in 1987.

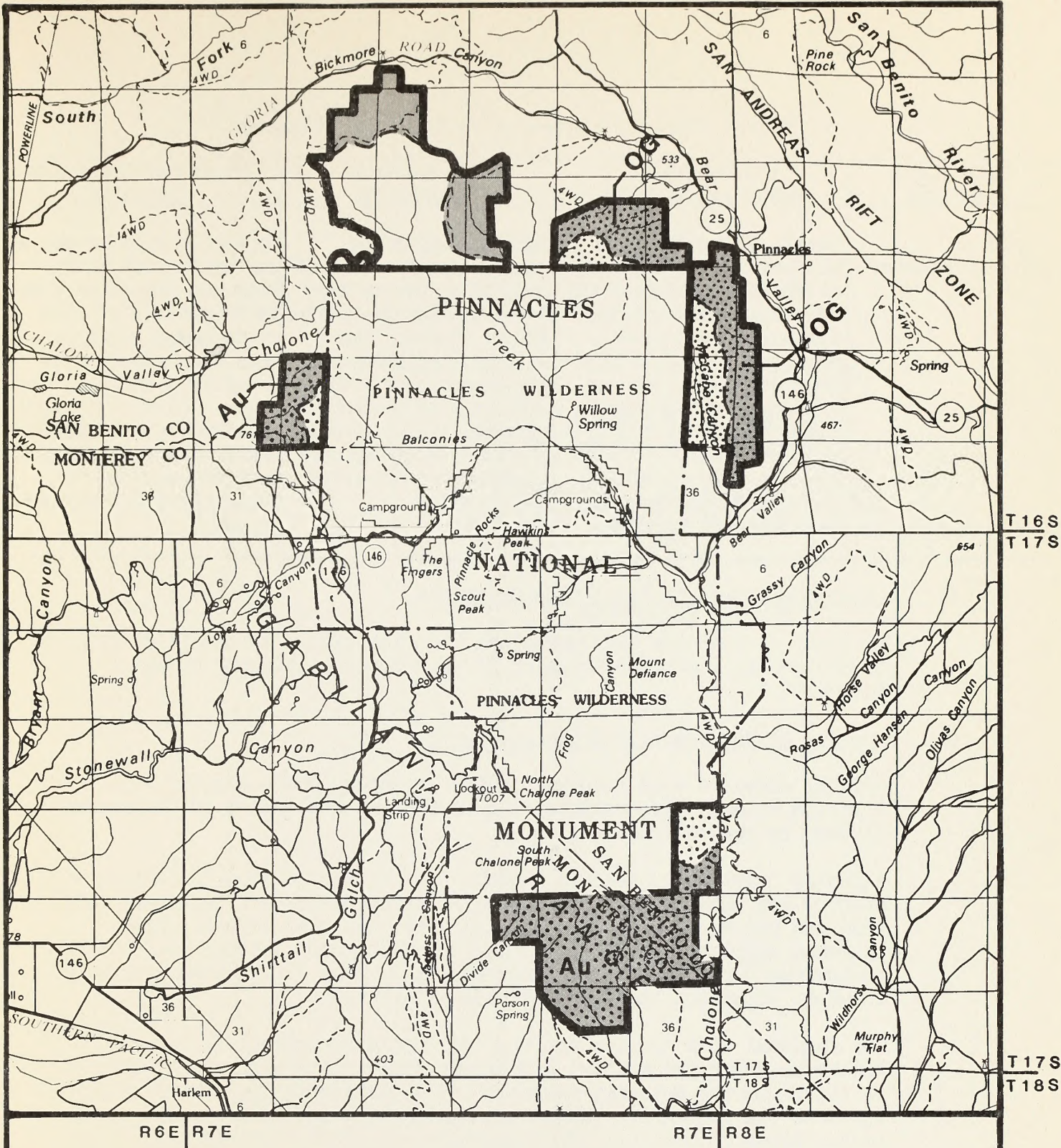
Based upon this USGS report, the WSA had low potential for all minerals, including oil and gas. However, a re-assessment of the USGS data by BLM (April 1988), differs with the previous interpretations.

The northwestern and southeastern portions of the WSA were identified by USGS as having low development potential for gold. This identification was made despite the fact that adjacent deposits of gold within the Pinnacles Monument boundary yielded assay values of 0.03 ounce/ton. This data indicates that occurrences of gold may be found within the northwestern and southeastern portions of the WSA. These parts of the WSA have a moderate potential for the occurrence of gold based on the BLM mineral classification scheme. In April 1988, BLM made a new interpretation of existing oil and gas data from abandoned wells drilled adjacent to the WSA, (i.e., data from the "Bacon #1" well located in sec. 13, T. 16 S., R. 7 E, MDM). This well was drilled in 1963 and encountered numerous oil occurrences from the same geologic formations that are productive in the Monroe Swell oil field 15 miles south of the WSA. This data indicates that the northeastern part of the WSA had moderate potential for the occurrence of oil and gas.

According to BLM records dated March 23, 1988, no unpatented mining claims, or oil and gas or geothermal leases exist in the WSA.

E. Impacts on Resources

The following table summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for all alternatives considered including designation or non-designation of the entire area as wilderness. (For a full explanation of this summary, refer to the Central California Study Areas - Wilderness Final Environmental Impact Statement.)



Recommended for Wilderness

Recommended for Non Wilderness

Land outside WSA Recommended for Wilderness

Split Estate

State

Private

Explanation

High Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals

Moderate Potential for the Occurrence of Energy and/or Non-energy Minerals

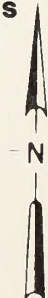
M Moderate Mineral Potential Location in a High Mineral Potential Area

H High Mineral Potential Location in a Moderate Mineral Potential Area

Commodity Symbols

Au Gold

OG Oil & Gas



Pinnacles
Mineral Resource Potential

0 1 2 3
MILES

Map-2
040-303

Table 4 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION (PARTIAL-WILDERNESS)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE
Impact on Wilderness Values	Overall, wilderness values will be negligibly impacted on less than 1 percent of the WSA. Prescribed burns conducted on 3,500 to 5,000 acres over the next 30 to 35 years and pre-treatments on 500 acres of the nonsuitable portion of the WSA every 10 to 15 years will have a minor impact on these values but these impacts will be short-term and highly localized.	Impacts on wilderness values, overall, would basically be the same as those described under the Proposed Action. However, there would be a negligible positive impact to these values as a result of eliminating motorized vehicle use and precluding mechanized pre-treatments and fire-break construction.	Impacts would be the same as for the Proposed Action. Motorized vehicle use would be limited to 4 1/2 miles of designated primitive ways and precluded in the remainder of the area. Fire engines and other motorized vehicles would be allowed for fire suppression but would be restricted to existing routes as much as possible.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local or economic considerations were identified in the Final EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments

Several comments were received in the inventory phase dealing with wildlife values, fire management concerns and the amount of wilderness already in the region.

A public hearing was held in Fresno, California. During the public hearing and comment period, a total of 82 comments were received, both oral and written, related specifically to this unit. Twenty-nine comments supported the Bureau's Partial-Wilderness Alternative. Forty-Four comments supported the All-Wilderness Alternative, and nine comments supported the No-Wilderness Alternative.

The National Park Service and the California Department of Water Resources supported partial-wilderness designation with administration by the Pinnacles National Monument. The California Department of Fish and Game was opposed to wilderness designation due to perceived restrictions on hunting. No comments specific to this WSA were received from either San Benito or Monterey Counties.

Ventana Contiguous

CA-040-308

VENTANA CONTIGUOUS WILDERNESS STUDY AREA (WSA)

(CA-040-308)

1. THE STUDY AREA --- 676 acres

The Ventana Contiguous WSA is located in the west-central portion of Monterey County, in the northern portion of the Santa Lucia Mountain Range. The WSA is approximately five miles south of the town of Carmel Valley. The WSA includes 676 acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land (see Map 1 and Table 1).

The WSA is bounded on the south for one-half mile by the Los Padres National Forest. The remainder of the WSA is bounded by private lands.

The landscape is dominated by a rugged steep ridge which runs between two canyons formed by Black Rock Creek and the south fork of Black Rock Creek. The majority of the terrain may be characterized as steep slopes with the principle vegetation consisting of chemise, buck brush, and manzanita. Large pines, oaks, and sycamores occur along the creeks. The elevation of the unit varies from about 1,000 feet to 2,800 feet.

The WSA was studied under Section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Suitability recommendations were analyzed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Central California Study Areas and in the Final EIS for the Central California Section 202 Wilderness Study Areas. A summary of the area's wilderness values was included in the Final EIS. Two different suitability recommendations were analyzed in the EIS: all wilderness and no wilderness.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE --- 0 acres recommended for wilderness
676 BLM acres recommended for non-wilderness

No wilderness is the recommendation for this WSA. The entire acreage in the WSA is released for uses other than wilderness. The all wilderness alternative is considered to be the environmentally preferred alternative as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The no wilderness alternative will be implemented in a manner which will use all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The WSA is recommended nonsuitable for the following reasons: Effective management would be difficult due to the small size and lack of topographic continuity with the adjacent wilderness. In consultation with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), it was determined that wilderness designation would

not enhance management of the adjacent Ventana Wilderness. The area's irregular boundaries are not easily identifiable on the ground, since they do not follow natural contours or features.

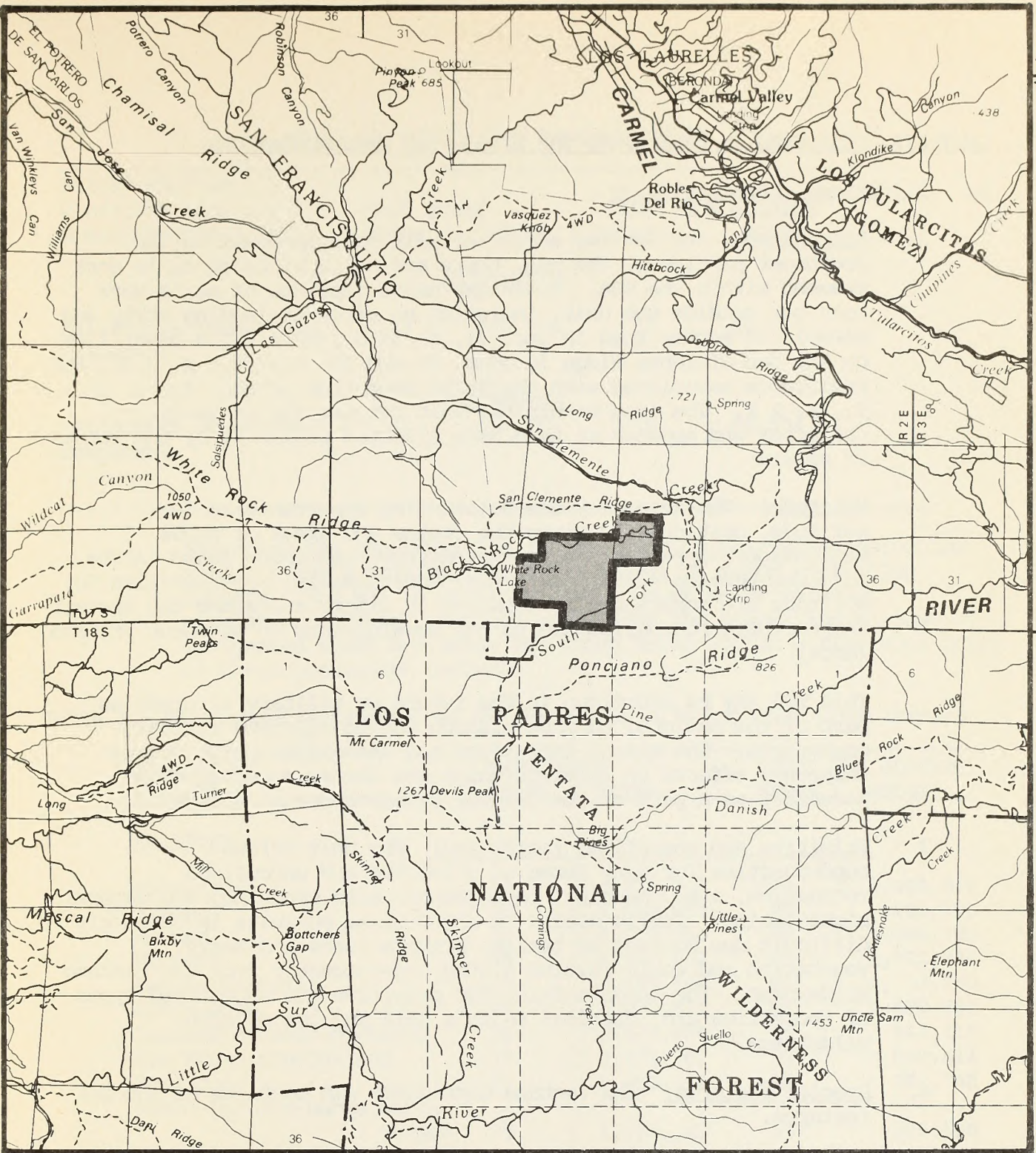
There is only a one-half mile common boundary with the adjacent Ventana Wilderness Area of the Los Padres National Forest. The WSA protrudes like an appendage from the forest boundary. This parcel lies generally down-slope from the forest and would not enhance the manageability of the forest lands. Due to the topography and dense vegetation, there is no reasonable way to reach the WSA from the forest without having to cross private property. There is an unauthorized road located on Black Rock Ridge within the WSA. This road goes about one-fourth mile into this WSA before ending on a knoll. This unauthorized route has been closed to vehicles and is revegetating naturally.

TABLE 1 - Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area


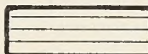

<u>Within Wilderness Study Area</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	676
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
Total		676
<u>Within the Recommended Wilderness Study Boundary</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(within WSA)	0
BLM	(outside WSA)	0
Split Estate	(within WSA)	0
Split Estate	(outside WSA)	0
Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness		0
Inholdings		
State		0
Private		0
<u>Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness</u>		<u>Acres</u>
BLM	(surface and subsurface)	676
Split Estate	(BLM surface only)	0
Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness		676

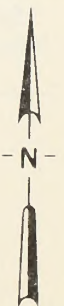
T16S
T17S

T17S
T18S



- | | | |
|---|---|----------------------------|
|  | NONE | RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS |
|  | RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS | |
|  | LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS | |

- | | |
|---|--------------|
|  | SPLIT ESTATE |
|  | STATE |
|  | PRIVATE |



**Ventana Contiguous
Proposal
MAP-1**



040-308
JUNE, 1988

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Wilderness Characteristics

1. Naturalness: Except for a quarter-mile vehicle route in the southwest portion of the WSA, there are no imprints of man's work present within the WSA. There are major imprints of man's work near but outside the unit, including an aircraft landing strip and associated access road in sec. 34, T. 17 S., R. 2 E., a power line on the San Clemente Ridge in secs. 27 and 28, T. 17 S., R. 2 E., and residences associated with the White Rock Club in sec. 32, T. 17 S., R. 2 E. The area within the unit retains its primeval character and appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature.
2. Solitude: The area provides outstanding opportunities for solitude, particularly along the creeks and areas of dense vegetation. Opportunities do not differ from those found in the adjacent Ventana Wilderness Area. Additionally, opportunities for solitude are substantially lessened on ridges and along the western and northern boundaries due to the developments on adjacent private lands.

This WSA may be overflowed in the future by military aircraft as part of the national defense mission during approved military operations. The visual intrusions and associated noise create temporary effects on solitude which are deemed acceptable and necessary as a part of the defense preparedness of the nation.

3. Primitive and unconfined recreation: The unit offers opportunities for many forms of primitive and unconfined recreation, i.e., hunting, photography, bird watching, and general sight-seeing. Public access to enjoy these pursuits is currently difficult due to lack of trails, private lands and heavy vegetation and would involve hiking cross-country from the Ventana Wilderness. The opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation are identical in this unit and the adjacent wilderness.
4. Special features: The Ventana Contiguous WSA contains no special features.

B. Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS)

1. Assessing the diversity of natural systems and features as represented by ecosystems: This WSA contains 676 acres of the California Chaparral/Chaparral ecosystem. The Ventana Contiguous WSA would not increase these diversity of the types of ecosystems represented in the NWPS.

Table 2 - Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification Domain/Province/PNV	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>NATIONWIDE</u>				
California Chaparral/ Chaparral	17	462,256	10	86,534
<u>CALIFORNIA</u>				
California Chaparral/ Chaparral	17	462,256	10	86,534

2. Expanding the opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's driving time (five hours) of major population centers: The WSA is within a five-hour drive of 16 major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of these population centers.

Table 3 - Wilderness Opportunities for Residents of Major Population Centers

Population Centers	<u>NWPS areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
<u>California</u>				
Bakersfield	32	4,071,358	128	3,998,548
Fresno	35	4,048,852	28	460,790
Merced	33	3,957,550	25	348,753
Modesto	36	4,126,963	81	1,722,326
Oxnard-Ventura	23	2,195,198	85	2,703,260
Sacramento	46	5,001,817	87	2,479,541
Salinas-Seaside-Monterey	24	3,676,896	45	644,415
San Francisco-Oakland	39	4,473,002	39	565,614
San Jose	27	3,765,512	29	352,748
Santa Barbara-Santa Maria Lompoc	20	1,166,142	35	528,590
Santa Cruz	27	3,765,512	32	407,890
Santa Rosa-Petaluma	10	888,579	12	134,167
Stockton	35	4,061,833	46	601,496
Vallejo-Napa-Fairfield	44	4,832,667	74	2,100,862
Visalia-Tulare-Porterville	34	4,431,635	61	1,681,921
Yuba City	44	4,951,805	85	2,459,500

3. Balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas: The Pinnacles Contiguous WSA is the only BLM WSA within 50 air miles recommended for partial-wilderness designation. The Pinnacles Wilderness Area is located approximately 30 miles northeast of the WSA, while the Ventana Wilderness Area is immediately adjacent. The former is managed by Pinnacles National Monument and the latter by the Los Padres National Forest.

C. Manageability

The Ventana WSA is manageable as wilderness, but only with difficulty. Manageability problems include the lack of effective public access and the WSA's small size and lack of topographic continuity with the adjacent wilderness. The area's irregular boundaries are not easily identifiable on the ground, since they do not follow natural contours or features.

D. Energy and Mineral Resource Values

1. Summary of information known at the time of the preliminary suitability recommendation: The energy and minerals potential of the Ventana Contiguous WSA is addressed in a 1982 BLM mineral assessment report (i.e., L. Vredenberg, "Geology and Mineral Resources of the Ventana Wilderness Contiguous Wilderness Study Area, California" BLM WSA File #CA-040-308). The description of mineral resources in the Affected Environment Section of the wilderness recommendations, Central California Section 202 Wilderness Study Areas Final Environmental Impact Statement, 1987 (EIS) was based on the 1982 BLM report. The EIS states that there was low potential for mineral resources and there is no known history of recent exploration. Because this WSA was recommended nonsuitable by BLM, no U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) or U.S. Bureau of Mines (BOM) mineral survey was conducted. BLM records dated March 25, 1988 identified no unpatented mining claims, mineral leases or mineral materials sales contracts/permits within the WSA.

The BLM mineral assessment report indicated the WSA is in the Coast Range geomorphic province and is primarily indicated underlain by intrusive granitic rocks (quartz diorite and grandiorite) associated with some metamorphic rocks and gabbro. No occurrences of locatable, leasable or salable minerals are known in the WSA.

2. Summary of significant new mineral resource data collected since the suitability recommendation, which should be considered in the final decision: No USGS or BOM mineral surveys were conducted in this WSA. No significant new mineral resource data has been generated concerning this WSA as of May 3, 1988. Because of the low potential for mineral resources, no mineral potential map was prepared for this document.

E. Impacts on Resources

The following table summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for all alternatives considered including designation or nondesignation of the entire area as wilderness. (For a full explanation of this summary, refer to the Central California Section 202 Study Areas - Wilderness Final Environmental Impact Statement.)

Table 4 - Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative

ISSUE-RELATED RESOURCES	PROPOSED ACTION NO-WILDERNESS/NO ACTION)	ALL-WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impacts on Wilderness Values	Wilderness values would receive minor to moderate impacts on about 1/4 of the WSA on a continuing basis from prescribed burning. There would be localized minor to moderate impacts from OHV access and fire suppression, if wildfires occur.	Impacts to wilderness values would be the same for the Proposed Action, except there would be no impacts from OHV access.
Impacts on OHV Access	OHV access would be unchanged and OHV use would remain at about 40 visitor days per year with about 160 visitor days of hunting use. ¹	OHV access would be eliminated. An estimated 175 visitor-use days would continue on a walk-in basis.

F. Local Social and Economic Considerations

No local or economic considerations were identified in the Final EIS. Therefore, no further discussion of this topic will occur in this document.

G. Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments

During the inventory phase, all comments received supported the Bureau's recommendation that the area should be studied for wilderness and considered with the adjacent USFS lands.

¹ Since the final EIS for this area was published, the unauthorized road within the WSA has been closed to vehicles and is revegetating naturally. The impacts on ORV access is the same as under the All Wilderness Alternative.

During the study phase a public hearing was held in Fresno, California. During the public hearing and comment period, a total of 74 comments both oral and written were received relative to the total study effort. Two comments specific to this WSA were responded to in the final EIS. The majority of the comments supported the all-wilderness alternative.

No other Federal, State, or County comments specific to this WSA were received.

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